NATION

M'rashtra TET postponed after leak

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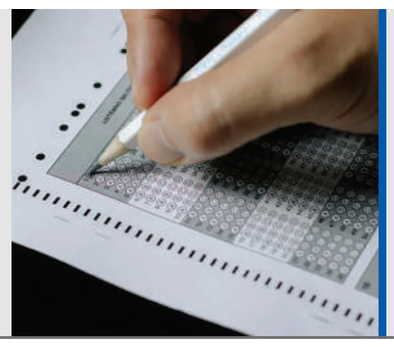

BUSINESS

US approves limited rollout of Claude Mythos 5 AI

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SPORTS

Spain sends 2-time champs Uruguay home

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Days after deal, fresh US & Iran strikes threaten truce

After US strikes, Tehran targets Bahrain & ships in Hormuz

DUBAI/ISLAMABAD, 27 JUNE

Just days after the US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at restoring peace in West Asia, the two countries exchanged fresh strikes on Saturday, raising fears that the fragile truce could unravel.

Iran launched a drone attack targeting Bahrain, home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, while a commercial tanker in the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an unidentified projectile. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said the vessel sustained damage to its bridge, but all crew were safe and no pollution was reported.

The attacks came a day after the US carried out airstrikes on Iranian missile and drone storage facilities and coastal radar sites in response to Tehran's drone attack on a cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday.

US Central Command described the strikes as "a powerful response", accusing Iran of violating the ceasefire and undermining freedom of navigation. Iran, in turn, accused Washington of breaching the interim agreement and said it had struck targets linked to US forces. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed responsibility for attacks on American military positions without providing details.

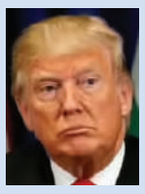
Iran launched a drone attack targeting Bahrain, home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet—*ANI*

Bahrain condemned the drone attack as a "flagrant violation" of its sovereignty. Iran had earlier warned that ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz must comply with its orders and indicated it could impose transit fees, a move rejected by the US and Gulf states. The Joint Maritime Information Centre, overseen by the US Navy, expanded the shipping route near Oman's coast to facilitate two-way traffic, while warning that the threat to commercial vessels remained "substantial" and that mariners should expect mine-clearance operations.

The renewed hostilities come barely days after the US and Iran signed a 14-point MoU on June 18, followed by technical talks in Switzerland mediated by Pakistan and Qatar. Amid the escalation, Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar spoke to his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to playing a "constructive role" in securing lasting peace. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 6*

Trump to visit India early next year: Rubio



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Saturday said President Donald Trump is likely to visit India early next year, describing India-US ties as "fantastic" and highlighting Trump's strong personal rapport with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Speaking to IANS in Washington DC, Rubio said he expected to travel to India before the end of the year to finalise preparations for the visit. If it goes ahead, it will be Trump's first visit to India since February 2020 and his first since returning to the White House. The leaders last met on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in France. Rubio also said negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement were nearing completion.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar garlands the statue of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda on his 517th birthday at Vidhana Soudha —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

DKS unveils Rs 1.25L cr plan for B'luru to grow vertically

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday said he had prepared a Rs 1.25 lakh crore plan to develop Bengaluru vertically.

"People come here believing they can build a better life. The City continues to grow every day, and its boundaries keep expanding. We cannot stop people from coming here. Therefore, I am thinking about promoting vertical growth for the city," Shivakumar said at an event to mark the 517th birth anniversary of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda, who is credited with founding Bengaluru. "We must provide opportunities for people of every religion to build their lives here." This comes as Shivakumar is set to lay the foundation stone for the twin-tunnel road near Hebbal on Sunday. Pointing out that Bengaluru has a population of 1.40 crore and around 1.30 crore registered vehicles, Shivakumar said, "No matter how much Metro and public transport we introduce, each person continues to own a vehicle." "In the coming year, we are moving ahead with plans to establish a Metro connection to the airport. Over the next two years, we are planning a 500km Metro expansion," he added.

Shivakumar also planted a sapling, part of GBA's initiative to plant 15 lakh saplings across Bengaluru. —*Salar News with Agencies*

>>>*More on Page 2*

Bodies of 8 Indians killed in Qatar blast repatriated

DOHA, 27 JUNE

The bodies of eight Indian nationals killed in an industrial accident at Ras Laffan have been repatriated, bringing the total to 12, the Indian embassy in Doha confirmed. The bodies of four victims were flown back a day earlier. "Mortal remains of 8 Indian nationals who unfortunately passed away in Ras Laffan accident have been repatriated to India on 26 June. 4 out of 12 mortal remains had been repatriated on 25 June," the embassy posted on X. Thirteen people, including 12 Indians and one Pakistani, died in an explosion at the Barzan gas facility operated by QatarEnergy LNG. The incident left 66 injured, with victims from Qatar, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The embassy thanked authorities and organisations for support and aid. Ambassador Vipul and officials visited Alkhor to meet injured Indian nationals receiving treatment. —*PTI*

Video of manual scavenging sparks outrage in K'taka

TUMAKURU, 27 JUNE

Civil workers' organisation demanded action after a video of manual scavenging at the government-affiliated KEB Engineers' Association in the district headquarters of Tumakuru went viral. Tumakuru is Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara's home district, In the video, four labourers are purportedly seen removing human waste from a septic tank with their bare hands and load it into a tractor, with unions accusing the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation (KPTCL) of perpetuating a banned practice. The four workers - Nandeesh and Arun from Tumakuru, and Murthy Nayak and Naveen from Madhugiri – were brought to the site on the pretext of cleaning a drain, but the department instead made them clean a sceptic tank. —*SALAR NEWS*

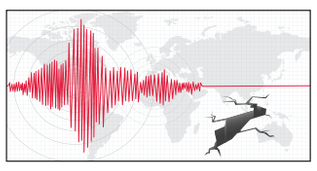
>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

TREMORS FELT IN DELHI AFTER 6.2 QUAKE STRIKES AFGHANISTAN

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Strong tremors were felt across Delhi and surrounding areas on Saturday evening after a powerful earthquake struck Afghanistan, prompting residents in parts of India and Pakistan to rush outdoors.

According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake measured 6.2 on the Richter scale and struck at 7.04 pm at a depth of 215 km in Afghanistan. The United States Geological Survey (USGS), however,



recorded the quake at magnitude 5.9, with its epicentre located about 43 km south of Jurm in north-eastern Afghanistan. The tremors were also felt in Pakistan, including Islamabad, Punjab, Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 6*

US court refuses to dismiss Adani case

- Judge Nicholas Garaufis said the DOJ had failed to provide sufficient facts or reasoning to justify dropping the prosecution, describing its submission as "terse, bland and conclusory".

NEW YORK, 27 JUNE

A US federal judge has refused to immediately approve the Donald Trump administration's request to dismiss the criminal indictment against billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others, directing the Department of Justice (DOJ) to provide a detailed explanation for abandoning the high-profile foreign bribery case.

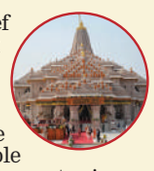
In an order issued on Friday, Judge Nicholas Garaufis said the DOJ had failed to provide sufficient facts or reasoning to justify dropping the prosecution, describing its submission as "terse, bland and conclusory". He directed prosecutors to file, by 13 July, every reason for seeking dismissal along with factual support before the court considers the request.

The DOJ had moved in May to dismiss with prejudice the indictment against Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, Vneet Jaain and five others, stating only that it had decided not to devote further resources to the case.

Adani was indicted in 2024 on charges of securities fraud, wire fraud and bribery. Prosecutors alleged he orchestrated a $250 million bribery scheme to secure approvals for solar power projects in India and then misled US investors by making false representations about the group's anti-corruption practices while raising funds in US markets. The DOJ dropped the case in May 2026 after Adani pledged a $10 billion investment in the US and hired prominent lawyers linked to President Donald Trump, including one of the President's personal attorneys. Separately, Adani Enterprises agreed to pay $275 million to the US Treasury to settle allegations relating to purchases of sanctioned Iranian oil. —*Agencies*

Ram Temple Trust to meet on 7 July amid scam row

LUCKNOW, 27 JUNE



VHP Chief Alok Kumar said on Saturday that the Ram Temple Trust will meet in Ayodhya on 7 July to decide on the next course of action following the resignation of the two senior Trust functionaries.

He said he hopes that a chief executive officer is appointed to manage the affairs of the Ram Temple.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai and trustee Anil Mishra have resigned following allegations of malfeasance in donations at the temple.

The resignations came on the heels of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) unravelling blatant malpractice and mismanagement in donation collection in its preliminary report to the Uttar Pradesh government. Based on its findings, the police filed an FIR and arrested eight people. The eight nabbed include Rai's former driver, who allegedly held the keys to the 'hundi' (donation boxes) without authority. Rai is the VHP's vice president. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

Tension at B'desh border over alleged pushback attempt

GUWAHATI, 27 JUNE

Tension gripped the India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Sribhumi district after an alleged pushback attempt triggered a face-off between the BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The incident occurred in the Bilbari border area, where the situation remained tense throughout the day.

Reports claimed that the confrontation began when an attempt was made to push a group of Bangladeshis towards the New Pallathal area on the Bangladesh side of the border.

The BGB allegedly objected to the move and prevented the group from entering Bangladesh.

As news of the incident spread, residents of nearby border villages reportedly gathered near the border carrying knives, sticks and bamboo poles to support the BGB.

Reports said personnel from the BGB's Pallathal border outpost repeatedly issued warnings to the BSF through loudspeakers, urging it not to undertake any "illegal pushback" and to move away from the border. The BGB also reportedly warned that it would be forced to open fire if the situation escalated.

The incident heightened tensions along the international border in Sribhumi district. — *Agencies*

FUNERAL WITH STATE HONOURS

Tamil filmmaker & actor Bhagyaraj no more

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

Tamil filmmaker and actor K Bhagyaraj, 73, known for his subtle humour and witty dialogues, died on Saturday due to a cardiac arrest, a source in the hospital where he was admitted said.

In a career spanning over five decades, Bhagyaraj produced many hits, and some of his celebrated directorial works are 'Andha 7 naatkal,' 'Mundhanai Mudichu,' 'Chinna Veedu,' and 'Enga Chinna Rasa.'

Bhagyaraj directed around 25 films and acted in around 75 movies. He was also widely regarded as one of the industry's finest screenwriters, with classics like 'Mundhanai Mudichu,' 'Andha 7 Naatkal' and 'Darling, Darling, Darling'.

He is survived by his wife, Poornima, and their children, actor Shanthanu and Saranya. Bhagyaraj was also the editor of the Tamil weekly magazine Bhagya, and has authored several novels.

"He attended the marriage of Khusboo's daughter in Goa. While we returned yesterday, he came back a bit early. He was cheerful throughout. This morning, after returning from walking, he complained of chest pain and was rushed to hospital," actress Suhasini Maniratnam told reporters.

DMK president Stalin described Bhagyaraj as an incredible director who was the uncrowned king of screenplays, and a realistic hero who attracted everyone, and a writer who had the power to convey complex situations in short dialogues. The Tamil Nadu government has announced state honours for the veteran filmmaker's funeral recognising his immense contribution to the Tamil film industry. — *PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*

The man Nagendra allegedly locked himself inside the vehicle and triggered the explosion. He died on the spot as the car was completely engulfed in flames —*SALAR*

MAN BLASTS BOMB IN CAR NEAR TUMAKURU AFTER BID TO KILL EX

TUMAKURU, 27 JUNE

A 30-year-old man was burnt to death after a suspected petrol bomb exploded inside a moving car on the Bengaluru-Pune National Highway near Kallambella in Tumakuru district on Saturday, in what police suspect was an attempt to kill his former partner before taking his own life.

The deceased, as Nagendra from Uttara Kannada district, allegedly kidnapped Ramya, an operation theatre technician at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital in Bengaluru, after she ended their six-year relationship and rejected his repeated demands to marry him.

According to police, Nagendra travelled to Ramya's residence in Bengaluru on Saturday morning, allegedly forced her into a pre-booked cab after threatening her and her friend, and set off towards Ankola. A kidnapping complaint was subsequently filed at Siddapura police station.

During the journey, Nagendra allegedly threatened Ramya with a country-made petrol bomb before stabbing her on the head and hand with a knife. Fearing for their lives, the cab driver stopped the vehicle near Jogihalli in Sira taluk and jumped out.

Despite her injuries, Ramya managed to unlock the car and escape moments before an explosion engulfed the vehicle in flames, killing Nagendra.

Tumakuru Superintendent of Police Ashok KV said preliminary investigations indicated that Nagendra detonated the explosive himself. Police are recording statements from the injured woman and the cab driver. —*Salar News*

DKS launches 10km road as an alternative to NICE

Make Garden City great again: DKS begins process of planting 15 lakh sapplings across Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Amid the push for "vertical development", Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday inaugurated a 10.7km long, 100 meters wide, signal-free and toll-free corridor named after former chief minister and his political mentor SM Krishna, that aims to serve as major arterial road for Benglauru.

The road, built with a Rs 631 crore investment, will reduce travel time between Magadi Road and Mysuru Road from 60 minutes to 20 minutes. The 10-lane modern roadway, featuring green boulevards, service roads and a dedicated cycling track, connects Kadabagere Cross to Challaghatta Metro Station.

The road, with three underpasses, 11 bridges and a 270-metre tunnel offers a faster alternative to NICE Road. Officials said it has a three-metre central median for future Metro connectivity. It connects all nine blocks of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout and 11 neighbouring villages, improving connectivity for Kambipura, Kommaghatta, Kenchanapura and nearby areas. They said the road also provides faster access for commuters from Mysuru, Mandya, Hassan, Ramanagara, Kunigal and Magadi.

Addressing a gathering, Shivakumar said that the road will be expanded to 123km, connecting Electronic City to Mysuru Road, and final notification will be issued soon.

"Bengaluru cannot survive without this road, so I will take bold decisions. Landowners will be offered 35 per cent commercial land, 40 per cent residential land, and Transferable Development Rights (TDR) compensation. They can choose whichever option they prefer," he explained," he added.

In an apparent bid to make land owners part with their property, Shivakumar said a "Wall of Gratitude" will be set up. It will include the names of people who voluntarily part with their land for "public welfare projects".

"Through this, the sacrifices of landowners will be remembered," he said.

Prem Krishna, wife of late former CM SM Krishna, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, DyCM G Parameshwar, BJP MLA ST Somashekar, and Minister Krishna Byre Gowda during the inauguration of the SM Krishna Ten Lane Road connecting Mysuru Road and Magadi, in Bengaluru on Saturday—*MOHAMMED ASAD/PTI*

Earlier in the day, the CM paid floral tributes at the 108-foot bronze statue of Kempegowda near Kempegowda International Airport in Devanahalli. He said that airport authorities would submit a plan to ensure that every person who arrives sees the statue of the City's founder.

He said that 15 lakh saplings will be planted across the City in memory of Kempegowda, as part of the Bengaluru Development Authority's 'Green Bengaluru' initiative.

"By growing 15 lakh saplings in Bengaluru, we are making it a Garden City once again," Shivakumar said. This initiative is a major effort to mitigate the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect.

"It has been decided to create parks in the Forest Department lands in and around Bengaluru," Shivkumar added. He said that the Kempegowda Jayanthi would be held in a different constituency every year. *–Salar News*

AMID DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Tungabhadra nears dead storage levels just days after 3 CMs meet

KOPPAL, 27 JUNE

Despite Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu recently inaugurating the replacement of all 33 crest gates at the Tungabhadra reservoir, the dam is fast approaching dead storage due to poor monsoon rains.

The reservoir, with a total capacity of 105.788 TMC ft, held only 9.55 TMC ft of water on Friday, compared to 52.93 TMC ft on the corresponding day last year. With the dead storage level at about 2.3 TMC ft, only a little over 7 TMC ft remains usable.

Poor rainfall in the Malnad region and the Tungabhadra catchment has sharply reduced inflows. Koppal district has recorded an 8 per cent rainfall deficit in June, while neighbouring Raichur has reported a 38 per cent deficit.

The Tungabhadra, formed by the Tunga and Bhadra rivers originating at Gangamoola in the Western Ghats and merging at Koodli in Shivamogga, is a key water source for Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

AGRI DEPT WARNS OF 'DROUGHT'

Amid "drought-like conditions", the Agriculture Department has advised farmers to sow rainfed crops only after receiving 5–6 cm of rainfall in red soils and 6–7.5 cm in black soils. It has also urged farmers in rainfed upland areas to prioritise low water-intensive crops such as maize, sorghum, ragi, navane, sesame, niger, saame and baragu. It also issued an advisory on managing maize and groundnut – key crops – given the conditions. *—Salar News*

VP CP Radhakrishnan, Governor Thawarchand Gehlot, Minister UT Khader in Bengaluru, on Saturday

"The interest of the both state's farmers should be taken into account.. The only solution to this problem is interlinking (rivers). The water going into the sea should get stopped first. That water should be utilised by all the farmers equally, fairly

-CP Radhakrishnan, Vice President, in Bengaluru, on Karnataka-Tamil Nadu water row

HDK goes to Bidadi; DKS a no-show

RAMANAGARA, 27 JUNE

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday met with farmers at Byramangala near Bidadi, where the State government aims to set up a massive township and accused the Congress of "portraying him as a criminal".

Kumaraswamy had challenged Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to a public debate on Saturda over the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT), for which the government recently issued a final notification for land acquisition for over 400 acres, but the Congress leader did not turn up. Kumaraswamy even placed an empty chair next to himself. Addressing a gathering of farmers, Kumaraswamy defended his record as CM by rejecting the Congress' charge that the Bidadi township was his "dream project" and sought to explain the concept of the "Red Zone" in town planning.

He said this was merely a planning classification under the Comprehensive Development Plan and did not authorise the government to acquire private land.

"The Red Zone does not mean your land will be taken away," he said. "If I had not demarcated as 'Red Zone', there would not have been any agriculture land here. Land sharks would have eaten it."

He added that Assembly record show that he was against the township.

He also attacked the' land compensation plan, citing the NICE Road project. He alleged that 4,000 families affected by that project were yet to recieve the promised developed sites decades later. *—PTI*

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, on Saturday — *X@HD_KUMARASWAMY*

Permanent jobs are disappearing. Neither governments nor private industries are offering secure employment. Should we sacrifice farmers' land for such uncertain jobs?

-HD Kumaraswamy, JD(S) leader

CM wants to axe 2 lakh trees: Ashoka

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka on Saturday blasted Chief Minister DK Shivkumar for planting "staging a dama of planting 15 lakh saplings", but is moving to chop down 2 lakh trees in Bidadi for "real estate business".

In a post on X, he alleged that 87,903 coconut trees, 83,536 areca nut tree, and 12,550 mango trees will be destroyed for the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT).

"It's not just trees—it's destroying food wealth worth crores of rupees, including ragi, paddy, and finger millet grown over the years. The heartless government is wrecking it all," he stated.

Targeting Rahul Gandhi for shedding "crocodile tears" over the the Greater Nicobar Project, Ashoka asked him to "see the devastation next to the City." *—Salar News*

Hoteliers seek LPG price rollback

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The Karnataka State Hotels Association (KSHA) on Friday urged the Central Government to immediately slash commercial LPG cylinder prices, which have nearly doubled in recent months, citing a sharp decline in global crude oil prices.

According to KSHA President GK Shetty, commercial LPG cylinders were priced at around Rs 1,800 in February, with hotels procuring them for Rs 1,650 to Rs 1,700 per cylinder.

As international crude oil prices have now declined to around USD 70 per barrel, roughly the same level as in February, the Association urged the government to reduce prices accordingly.

"We request that, from July onwards, the price of commercial LPG cylinders be brought back to the February level so that the hotel industry receives much-needed relief," Shetty said.

The conflict in West Asia disrupted global gas supplies, which have since recovered to nearly 70 per cent of normal levels. India is dependent on the Strait of Hormuz. *—PTI*

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BJP submits internal report on cross-voting

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The Karnataka BJP's fact-finding committee on Saturday submitted its report on cross-voting during the recent MLC elections to State President BY Vijayendra, identifying lapses and recommending greater internal vigilance.

Committee chairman and senior MLC CT Ravi said the report was based on interactions with candidates, JD(S) leaders, Leaders of Opposition, Chief Whips and individuals identified through media reports and other inputs. However, he refused to disclose whether the report named those responsible, saying, "It was an internal inquiry."

Ravi said there were 12 instances of cross-voting by NDA legislators. "BJP lost four votes, including one invalid vote. Thirty votes had been allocated to the BJP's two candidates," he said. "One candidate secured 29 votes, with one declared invalid, while the other received 27 votes, three fewer than expected. The JD(S), expected to secure 22 votes, got only 14, an eight-vote shortfall."

Targeting the Congress, Ravi accused it of resorting to "unethical means". "When cross-voting happened in other states, the Congress used to say it was against democratic values. By encouraging cross-voting, you too have undermined democracy and have no moral right to question cross-voting in other states," he said. *—PTI*

9 killed in separate accidents in State

BIDAR, 27 JUNE

At least nine people were killed in four separate accidents across Karnataka on Saturday, including a highway collision in Koppal, a motorcycle crash in Tumakuru, a Muharram mishap in Ballari and a road accident in Dharwad.

5 KILLED IN KOPPAL CRASH

Five people died and four were injured after a goods vehicle crossed the divider and rammed a van on NH-63 near Bhanapur in Koppal district. The victims were travelling from Kabbar village in Haveri to Mantralayam. The deceased were Kenchamma Balekayi (35), her husband Praveen Shivaji Balekayi, son Chinmaya, 16; and Amrutha Kotyal, 25, and Ramesh Ballari, 45. One injured, Samarth Yadav, remains critical.

TEEN DIES ON FIRST BIKE RIDE

Nineteen-year-old Nandish Kumar, a resident of Doddahalli village died during his first ride on his newly purchased motorcycle near Gangasagar Cross when a speeding tipper lorry collided with the bike. Nandish died on his spot, while his friend who was the pillion rider escaped unharmed.

YOUTH DIES IN MUHARRAM RITUAL

Devendra, 28, of Kyadigehalu village in Ballari district, died after slipping into a ceremonial fire pit during the Muharram fire-walking ritual in Ballari. The incident took place in front of the village mosque during the traditional Alayi Kuni ritual. Devendra reportedly slipped while walking over the burning embers and fell into the fire pit, suffering severe burns. He died early on Saturday morning.

2 KILLED IN DHARWAD

Shanmukh Jogi, 28, of Dharwad and Sagar, 30, a native of Uttar Pradesh, were killed after their canter truck rammed a stationary lorry on NH-4 near Belur village while its driver was replacing a burst tyre. *—Salar News*

Five people were killed when a goods vehicle collided with a car near Koppal on Saturday —*SALAR*

Leopard dies after being hit by vehicle in Hunsur

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

A four-year-old leopard was killed after being hit by an unidentified vehicle while crossing the Hunsur–Mysuru highway near the Arabithittu Wildlife Sanctuary in the early hours of Saturday. Forest officials, led by Deputy Range Forest Officer Ramanagowda, reached the spot with veterinarians, conducted a post-mortem and disposed of the carcass as per protocol. A case has been registered and investigations are underway.

In a separate incident, youths rescued a deer from a pack of stray dogs at Hedathale village in Nanjangud taluk. The deer, which had wandered out of nearby forest, fell into an open well while trying to escape the attack. Forest officials from the Nanjangud range rescued the animal, shifted it to a rehabilitation centre for treatment, and appreciated the villagers for their timely intervention and efforts in saving the deer. *—Salar News*

IN DYCM'S DISTRICT

Govt flayed over manual scavenging at KEB

TUMAKURU, 27 JUNE

Civil workers' organisation demanded action after a video of manual scavenging at the government-affiliated KEB Engineers' Association in the district headquarters of Tumakuru went viral. Tumakuru is Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara's home district,

In the video, four labourers are purportedly seen removing human waste from a septic tank with their bare hands and load it into a tractor, with unions accusing the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation (KPTCL) of perpetuating a banned practice.

The four workers - Nandeesh and Arun from Tumakuru, and Murthy Nayak and Naveen from Madhugiri – were brought to the site on the pretext of cleaning a drain, but the department instead made them clean a sceptic tank. Organisations claim that the work took nearly three days, and the workers were not given any safety equipment – including gloves.

"We were brought here saying that we had to fill soil. Only after arriving did we realise it was a sceptic tank. We agreed to do the work only to earn a livelihood. We did not know that this kind of work is prohibited," the workers said.

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) district municipal workers' union leader Subrahmanya demanded stringent action against those responsible. In a statement, he described the incident as "disgraceful". The union demanded rehabilitation, permanent employment, and compensation for the workers.

The Tumakuru District Municipal Workers' Union and the Karnataka State Municipal Workers' Union urged the Social Welfare Department, the Labour Department, the Tumakuru City Corporation, and police to start a probe. *—Salar News*

The labourers were allegedly contacted to clean a dain at the Karnataka Electricity Board premises in Tumakuru, but when they arrived, they were asked to clean a sceptic tank, which reportedly took three days —*SALAR*

JD(S) workers throw slippers at Cong MLA

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 27 JUNE

Tensions ran high during the Kempegowda Jayanti celebrations in Chikkaballapur on Saturday as JD(S) workers and supporters protested against Congress MLA Pradeep Eshwar and even threw slippers at his direction.

The protesters were reportedly angered by Eshwar's recent comments against former chief minister and JD(S) leader) HD Kumaraswamy, and demanded that he be barred from participating in the official function. During Eshwar's procession through the town's main streets, JD(S) supporters created a noisy ruckus, raising slogans against the MLA and attempted to prevent him from entering Kannada Bhavana, where the government function was being held. Police intervened and escorted him into the venue. As the programme was about to begin, a group of protesters entered the hall, shouting slogans and insisting that the MLA leave the venue.

After the function, as Eshwar was leaving the venue, a couple of slippers were allegedly hurled at his vehicle. Police quickly brought the situation under control.

Meanwhile, JD(S) MLA BN Ravikumar of Sidlaghatta criticised Eshwar, accusing him of making irresponsible remarks against senior leaders, including PM Narendra Modi. Ravikumar declared that if Eshwar retained the Chikkaballapur seat, he would serve as a watchman at the latter's house. However, if Eshwar lost, Ravikumar dared him to work as a watchman at Kumaraswamy's house. *—Salar News*

Ex-Kolkata councillor arrested for forgery

KOLKATA, 27 JUNE

Former Kolkata councillor Tarakeswar Chakraborty was arrested Saturday on charges of cheating, forgery, theft, and outraging a woman's modesty. Chakraborty, ex-TMC councillor of ward 104, was detained after two FIRs were registered at Survey Park police station. A senior officer said, "He was arrested after sufficient prima facie evidence emerged during investigation." One FIR alleges Chakraborty threatened and intimidated the complainant; the other includes charges of forgery, theft, and outraging modesty. Police stated, "He and his associates extorted money and seized property by controlling fish farms forcibly." The investigation remains at an early stage, and further legal action will follow based on evidence—*PTI*

Ex-JD(U) prez meets Nitish, fuels rapprochement buzz

PATNA, 27 JUNE

RCP Singh, four years after quitting JD(U), met party leader Nitish Kumar at his residence. Singh said, "Our relation is intact," and added, "when a meeting takes place, a new inning begins," suggesting future interactions. Singh, who described their long association of 25 years, said, "It was a pleasant meeting, and we had a cordial conversation." JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar dismissed speculation of Singh rejoining the party, criticising his past activities and role in the 2020 assembly elections. Singh, a former IAS officer and ex-JD(U) national president, left the party after disagreements over cabinet berths and political strategy. Critics allege Singh attempted to engineer a split within JD(U). —*PTI*

Vaiko's MDMK snaps ties with DMK-led SPA

Cites bid to prop up 'Hindutva communal' AIADMK govt

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

Accusing long-time ally DMK of attempting to allegedly prop up an AIADMK government, the MDMK general council, led by party chief Vaiko, on Saturday announced its decision to snap ties with the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance.

Such a move to install an AIADMK-led regime—one that had a pre-poll tie-up with "Hindutva communal forces"—made the DMK's avowed secular-ideology-based alliance slogan meaningless, the party asserted.

In a resolution passed at the meeting held here, the MDMK alleged that after the Tamil Nadu Assembly election results were announced on 4 May 2026, it emerged that "behind-the-scenes political deals" had gone against the mandate given by the people.

It was an open secret that "arrangements" were made to install an AIADMK government, the MDMK alleged without directly naming the DMK.

The AIADMK had won a mere 47 seats in the April 23 assembly polls by aligning with "Hindutva communal forces."

By attempting to form an AIADMK government, certain vested interests rendered completely meaningless the DMK's proclamation that the Secular Progressive Alliance was an "ideological alliance."

The MDMK recalled that it had been part of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance for over eight years.

The Vaiko-led party had passed a resolution at a high-level committee meeting on 3 December 2017, to forge an alliance with the DMK.

It was to prevent communal forces from gaining a foothold in Tamil Nadu and to protect the core ideological tenets of the Dravidian movement from being eroded, the MDMK stated. —*ANI*

MDMK party Chief Vaiko said party will decide on future ties at an 'appropriate time' –*PTI*

Manickam Tagore named new TN Cong chief

Congress on Saturday appointed Manickam Tagore the new president of its Tamil Nadu state unit, replacing K Selvaperunthagai. Tagore is a Lok Sabha MP from Virudhunagar and is also the AICC in-charge of party affairs in Andhra Pradesh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He is also the Congress whip in the Lok Sabha. In Tamil Nadu, the Congress is an alliance partner of the TVK, the ruling party led by actor-politician Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay Joseph.

ALLEGED EMBEZZLEMENT

SIT finds SOP violations at Ayodhya Ram Temple

LUCKNOW, 27 JUNE

The alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ayodhya Ram Temple has snowballed into a major controversy, with an SIT probe finding lapses in the shrine's donation management system and eight people associated with the counting of cash and valuables being arrested.

Here is a look at what the investigation has found so far:

While the details of how the donations were siphoned off and exactly how much are still under investigation, the SIT has pointed out some major lapses in its preliminary report. SOPs like deploying a security guard during the counting process, frisking of personnel while entering and leaving the counting room, and preserving CCTV footage of the donation-counting process for 180 days were violated. Violating rules, Ramashankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav, the former driver of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai, held the keys to several 'hundis' (donation boxes), they said.

"Cash received in the hundis whose keys were with Tinnu was swindled apparently due to laxity in implementing the SOPs. The exact modus operandi is being established," a source said.

The SOPs, finalised at a meeting of trust officials and SBI representatives, were put in place in 2025.

"The SOPs included a dress code requiring donation-counting staff to wear clothes without pockets, deployment of a guard through the Sainik Security Services (SIS) agency, frisking of all personnel entering and leaving the donation-counting rooms. None of these were followed," the source said.

Another major violation was that CCTV footage of donation counting was retained for only 45 days not 180 days. —*PTI*

SIT pointed to major lapses in its preliminary report —*PTI*

In a U-turn, Punjab govt notifies G RAM G scheme

CHANDIGARH, 27 JUNE

The AAP government in Punjab has notified the Viksit Bharat Guarantee Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB G RAM G) scheme, set to come into force from 1 July, a sharp reversal from its earlier stance opposing the central rural employment programme.

The 26 June gazette notification, issued by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats, said the scheme would provide 125 days of statutory wage employment per financial year to rural households whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.

The move comes months after the Bhagwant Mann government convened a special Assembly session in December 2025, where a unanimous resolution was passed against the VB-G RAM G Act, accusing the BJP-led Centre of scrapping MGNREGA under a "deliberate conspiracy" to deprive poor and Dalit labourers of their livelihood.

The opposition Congress slammed the AAP government, questioning what "deal and compromise" with the BJP had prompted the reversal. Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring said the timing was as surprising as it was significant, and questioned whether it was linked to the ongoing controversy surrounding Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and the recent video row. —*PTI*

Why are fuel prices high when global oil rates are down: Kharge

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday attacked the government about high fuel prices when global crude oil rates had returned to the pre-West Asia war levels.

In a post on X, he accused the BJP of "looting" and "pickpocketing" the people, and alleged that the public has become just a means for the BJP to extract taxes and raise its collections.

Posing three questions to the government, Kharge pointed out that petrol was Rs 94.77 a litre and diesel Rs 87.67 when crude oil was at USD 138 per barrel. With crude now at USD 70.71, he questioned why petrol and diesel were still being sold at Rs 102.12 and Rs 95.20 a litre respectively. He also asked why commercial LPG prices, doubled by the BJP government citing the West Asia war, had not been rolled back now that supply had normalised.

Congress President and Rajya Sabha LoP Mallikarjun Kharge –*PTI*

- Congress president Kharge on Saturday attacked the government about high fuel prices when global crude oil rates had returned to the pre-West Asia war levels.

Domestic cylinders, the 5-kg small cylinders useful for migrants, and CNG - everything has been jacked up, he noted. The Congress has been accusing the NDA government of not reducing oil prices after they have come down globally. The opposition party has also accused the BJP of "looting" the public through higher taxes on petrol, diesel and LPG. —*PTI*

CPI(M) accuses Keralam govt of Rs 600 cr loss

T'PURAM, 27 JUNE

The CPI(M) on Saturday rejected allegations about the LDF government's liquor policy and accused the Kerala government led by Chief Minister Satheesan of causing a "revenue loss of around Rs 600 crore by granting tax concessions" on low-alcohol liquor.

The CPI(M) state secretariat said the real issue was the alleged reduction in liquor taxes under the present government, which, it claimed, had resulted in a huge loss to the state exchequer while benefiting large distilleries.

The party accused the UDF and a section of the media of trying to divert attention from the issue by launching what it described as a "false propaganda campaign instead of answering questions about the tax reduction." The CPI(M) asserted that the LDF government had not reduced taxes on liquor.

Instead, it said, the LDF government had permitted the production of Horti Wine and Horti Liquor from agricultural produce considering the interests of farmers.

The CPI(M) said permission was granted for low-alcohol liquor as per the recommendations of the Udayabhanu Commission, and the decision was announced in the 2022-23 liquor policy —*PTI*

JOIN RSS: RAJ TO IPS OFFICER FOR SPEECH AT RIGHT-WING EVENT

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Saturday slammed senior IPS officer Vishwas Nangare Patil for attending a Hindu Sakal Samaj event and praising the RSS, saying the officer should resign and join the organisation if he wished to publicly express his admiration for it.

In a Facebook post, Thackeray said a police officer's loyalty should lie solely with the duties of the force, adding that Patil appeared to have developed a dual allegiance. He questioned whether a serving government officer should attend such gatherings at all.

Thackeray said, "If you have affection or admiration for the RSS, keep it to yourself. If you wish to express it publicly, resign and join the RSS or the BJP,"

The row erupted after an undated video of Patil's speech at a Hindu Sammelan organised by the Sakal Hindu Samaj went viral on Thursday. The officer was appointed Nagpur Police Commissioner earlier this week.

Maharashtra Congress has also demanded an inquiry, saying the speech raises questions about his neutrality and compliance with service rules.

Thackeray questioned whether the government would apply the same standard it used in 2012, when a constable was sent on compulsory leave for perceived partiality, to Patil's case. —*PTI*

THREE DAY VIST

Modi hands over patrol vessel, plants tree in Seychelles

T'PURAM, 27 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday handed over a Made-in-India fast patrol Vessel to the Seychelles coast guard and joined President Patrick Herminie in a tree plantation ceremony, marking a day of deepened bilateral ties during his three-day official visit to the Indian Ocean archipelago.

The Ministry of External Affairs said, the vessel, PS LESPWAR, will strengthen Seychelles' maritime surveillance and exclusive economic zone patrol capabilities. Modi also handed over six ambulances, 10 utility vehicles and five laser radial boats to further support the island nation's development.

The handover reinforces India's Vision MAHASAGAR, Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions, which aims to contribute to security and stability across the Indian Ocean region. India has long been a partner in strengthening Seychelles' defence capabilities through patrol vessels, aircraft and training support.

On the environmental front, Modi and Herminie planted the iconic Coco de Mer at the Seychelles National Botanical Garden, a species unique to the islands and featured on its coat of arms.

Modi also visited the giant tortoise enclosure, noting the Aldabra Giant Tortoise's historic association with India-Seychelles ties. Tortoises were gifted to zoos in Kolkata and Hyderabad by the Seychelles in 2014. Upon arrival, Modi received a ceremonial Guard of Honour and was welcomed by cultural performances, including a dance from Kutch, and a large gathering of the Indian diaspora. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Modi feeds Aldabra Giant Tortoises with Seychelles President Patrick Herminie during a visit to the Seychelles National Botanical Garde –*PTI*

NIA chargesheets 3 more in Red Fort blast case

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a supplementary chargesheet against three more individuals, including an absconding paediatrician, for their involvement in the high-intensity vehicle bomb blast near Delhi's Red Fort last year.

The NIA named Zameer Ahmad Ahanger, Tufail Ahmad Bhat, and Muzafar Ahmad, alias Faraz or Zafar, all from Jammu and Kashmir, as accused in the chargesheet filed before Patiala House Courts. This brings the total number of accused in the case to 13, including the prime suspect Dr Umer Un Nabi.

Muzafar Ahmad, a paediatrician with MBBS and MD qualifications, is identified as the elder brother of co-accused Dr Adeel Ahmed Rather. The NIA statement said Muzafar was a founding member of "AGuH (Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind) Interim," an offshoot of Al-Qaeda, and one of the prime architects of the conspiracy. The investigation revealed Muzafar's attendance at a secret Eidgah meeting in Srinagar in June 2022, during which AGuH Interim was established.

The NIA has issued a Non-Bailable Warrant (NBW) against Muzafar, and efforts are ongoing to locate and arrest him. Zameer, an Overground Worker of AGuH Interim, acted as a courier, while Tufail, a former OGW of the proscribed terror organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba, supplied arms, including an AK-47 and a Krinkov rifle, delivering them to Dr Umer Un Nabi for Rs 3 lakh.

The NIA continues its investigation. —*PTI*

'INDIA LONE VOICE OF SILENCE'

Sonia flays govt for not calling out Israel's 'Gaza genocide'

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi said on Saturday that the NDA government's "stony silence" on Israel's "Gaza genocide" are not just morally reprehensible but also inexplicable from a national interest perspective.

Sonia claimed that India has alienated itself from its 'historical allies' in Palestine, Iran and West Asia and has distanced itself from global public opinion, while letting Pakistan swoop in to claim the space of a mediator.

In an article for 'The Indian Express,' Sonia also termed Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel ahead of the US-Israel joint attack on Iran a "bewildering strategic decision."

This is the fourth article on West Asia within a year that Sonia has penned. In March, she wrote a piece on the Iran war in which she said the Modi government's silence on the targeted assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is not neutral but an abdication, and raises serious doubts about the credibility of India's foreign policy.

In her latest article, she said the spirit of Indian nationhood demands that it speak up for Palestinians whose children have been so brutally targeted and the calculus of national interest demands that India respond to the global public opinion against the Israeli regime's "genocidal actions" in Gaza.

"The Modi government's continued silence simply cannot be explained rationally or morally," she said.

In September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory concluded that Israeli authorities were committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, she said in her article titled 'India remains silent on Gaza, the world continues to speak up'.

In June 2026, the same commission — now headed by Justice (retired) S Muralidhar, a distinguished Indian jurist — has poignantly reiterated that Israeli actions are intended to destroy the very existence of the Palestinians in Gaza by targeting their children, she said.

The targeting of children is not incidental, but deliberate, Sonia asserted. —*PTI*

Sonia claimed India has alienated itself from its 'historical allies' in Palestine, Iran and West Asia –*AI*

> **Sonia Gandhi, through her article, is trying to misinform people and conceal the real truth. The fact is that India has not only articulated its position on Gaza and the Palestine issue on multiple occasions, but has also provided tangible humanitarian aid...It is Modi who has been able to navigate a fine line and talk to both Israel and Palestine at the same time, to America, Russia and Ukraine at the same time, and to the Western camp and Iran at the same time. This is not a policy of non-alignment but of all-alignment**
>
>
>
> -Shehzad Poonawalla, BJP leader

M'rashtra TET postponed after leak

Test cancelled a day before scheduled date, cops arrest 3 from Bhiwandi, gang busted

THANE/PUNE, 27 JUNE

- The MSCE said that revised dates for TET 2026 will be published on its website. Candidates will not be charged re-registration fee for the examination

The Teacher Eligibility Test 2026 in Maharashtra was postponed on Saturday, just a day before it was scheduled to take place, after parts of the question paper were allegedly leaked, leading to the arrest of three persons from Bhiwandi and the busting of an "inter-state syndicate."

Police have set up a SIT, and police teams have been dispatched to different states to trace the source of the leak.

Around six lakh candidates were scheduled to appear for the examination across 1,728 centres at 37 locations. The development triggered a political firestorm, with the Opposition accusing the BJP of being busy breaking parties instead of conducting exams.

The Bhiwandi Police arrested three individuals in Thane district, originally from Bihar and Haryana, with copies of the original question paper.

The SIT headed by Pawan Bansod comprises two ACPs, nine inspectors and AIs.

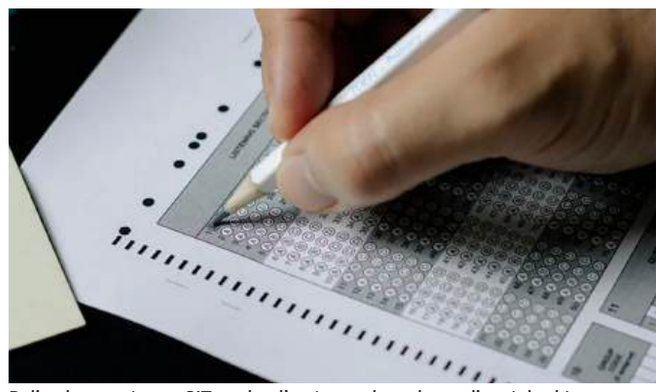
"On June 27, DCP (Zone-2) of Bhiwandi, Pawan Bansod, received a tip-off that some people were planning to sell the leaked TET question papers. Police detained three suspects and recovered TET question papers meant for Sunday's exam," police said.

Senior officials of the Education Department were called to check the seized documents. The education authorities confirmed that the question papers found with the suspects were indeed the original question papers for the 28 June examination.

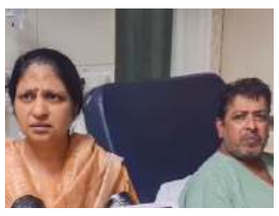
"After this, the three were as arrested on the spot," according to the release.

The Maharashtra State Council of Examination (MSCE) has asked candidates not to believe rumours and said that revised dates and updated schedules for the TET 2026 will be published soon on the council's website.

Meanwhile, officials said that candidates will not be charged a re-registration fee for the examination. — *PTI*



Police have set up a SIT, and police teams have been dispatched to different states to trace the source of the TET question paper leak—*PTI*



— PTI

Pune police summons Siya Goyal's family

PUNE, 27 JUNE

The police summoned Siya Goyal's parents, Pravin and Puja Goyal, and her brother Sahil for questioning at Lonavala police station. Siya's family arrived in the morning, with Sahil questioned for over ten hours on Friday. A senior officer stated, "Today, Siya's parents and brother were summoned for questioning, and their statements will be recorded." Siya's father was briefly hospitalised after her arrest earlier this week. Siya, 20, and her lover, Chetan Chaudhary, 22,, are accused of pushing Ketan Agarwal off Lohagad Fort on 18 June, after allegedly plotting due to their wedding plans.—*PTI*

Kolkata warehouse collapse toll rises to 16

KOLKATA, 27 JUNE

The death toll in the Kolkata warehouse collapse rose to 16 on Saturday after an injured person died in hospital, as rescue teams entered the fourth day of operations to ensure no one remains trapped. Cameras have been placed beneath the rubble to detect survivors, while mobile phone tower data is being used to trace individuals whose phones remain active under the debris. An official said, "Search and rescue remains our priority. Debris clearance will begin only after we are certain no one is trapped," and a senior official confirmed the death of Khalek Sardar of Basanti, bringing the toll to 16, with 17 others still under treatment. The Indian Railways joined the rescue operation on Friday after the NDRF sought assistance in cutting and removing twisted steel structures. —*PTI*

— PTI

Court extends relief to Khan sir from arrest

PATNA, 27 JUNE

A Patna court extended educator Faisal Khan, known as Khan Sir's, protection from arrest until 30 June in connection with the coaching institute firing case. The incident occurred in early June after Khan Sir's institute was allegedly vandalised; his security guards are accused of firing. Khan Sir was named in the FIR, with protection granted on 9 June. A case diary was submitted, and arguments deferred to Tuesday. His lawyer, Arvind Kumar Mouar, said, "Khan Sir is cooperating with the police and the investigating officers," and the 'no coercive action' order remains in place. —*PTI*

Muslim woman conducts Hindu man's last rites

KASARAGOD, 27 JUNE

A Muslim woman panchayat member has performed the last rites of a Hindu man in northern Kasaragod in Keralam after his family declined to claim his body. Narayanan, 64, from Chigrupadavu, died of advanced cancer at Kozhikode Medical College Hospital. Irfana Iqbal, district panchayat chairperson, said Narayanan was found weak and starving a month ago. She arranged his care and hospitalisation after authorities were informed. His relatives refused to claim the body but authorised Iqbal to perform the funeral rites, which she did at a Hindu crematorium. Iqbal said, "Humanity is above religion and politics," and received praise from social media and politician Rajmohan Unnithan, who called her an "icon of hope." —*PTI*

The new rocket engine roared to life, held steady, and switched off exactly as planned, the ISRO later said—*PTI*

ISRO tests its semi-cryogenic rocket engine

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

- Engineers fired only the engine's power head, the front part that pumps fuel into the engine. They left out the thrust chamber, the part where the propellant actually burns

The ISRO hot tested its semi-cryogenic engine at the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri on 24 June, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan told reporters in Bengaluru on Saturday. He also offered updates on India's Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission.

The new rocket engine roared to life, held steady, and switched off exactly as planned, Narayanan said. With this success, India has edged a little closer to flying its own astronauts.

Narayanan described the test as a major achievement.

Engineers fired only the engine's power head, the muscular front section that pumps fuel and oxygen into the engine at ferocious pressure. They left out the thrust chamber, the part where the propellant actually ignites and produces flame.

Running the power head alone, ISRO pushed it to 175 tonnes of force, around 88 per cent of the engine's full strength, for the first time. It was the eighth test in the series, after earlier runs at 47 per cent and 60 per cent.

The power head is the trickiest section of any rocket engine.

At its heart are the turbopumps, spinning machines that hurl fuel and oxygen inwards, here at crushing pressures of 400 and 500 bar.

By testing this unit on its own, scientists can confirm that everything flows and holds without risking the entire assembly.

Narayanan said ISRO is now preparing to fire the full engine.

A cryogenic engine burns gases chilled to hundreds of degrees below zero.

A semi-cryogenic one keeps the deeply chilled oxygen but swaps the frozen fuel for ordinary refined kerosene, which is cheaper, denser and far easier to store. —*PTI*

4-yr-old fights for life after rape in UP

BUDAUN, 27 JUNE

A four-year-old girl, who went missing from Alapur area here was rescued in a critical condition after a seven-hour search, police said on Saturday.

Medical examination confirmed rape, and a hunt is on for the suspect.

Police said a man filed a complaint on Thursday night stating that his four-year-old granddaughter had gone missing in suspicious circumstances.

His family had carried out an extensive search but could not find the child. After receiving information, the Alapur police registered a case and constituted special teams led by the inspector-in-charge.

After an intensive search, the girl was rescued in a critical condition at around 4 am on Friday. Budaun SSP Ankita Sharma said the child had injury marks on her body. She was immediately taken to the Women's District Hospital in Budaun for medical examination, which confirmed rape.

The SSP added that sections about the rape of a minor and provisions of the POCSO Act have been added to the FIR, which was earlier registered with kidnapping charges.

The child is undergoing treatment, and her medical examination was conducted in the presence of her family. Counselling is being provided by specialists. — *PTI*

PAROLED POCSO CONVICT HELD FOR RAPING U'KHAND KID

PITHORAGARH, 27 JUNE

A 35-year-old man, who was granted parole last month after being convicted in a POCSO case, was arrested within eight hours for allegedly raping a five-year-old girl here, police said on Saturday.

Hosiyar Singh, a driver, was sentenced in 2024 to seven years imprisonment for sexually assaulting a minor boy in a 2022 case under the POCSO Act.

Pithoragarh SP Akshaya Prahlad Kondey said after the victim's relatives lodged a missing person complaint, four police teams tried to trace the suspect.

"The culprit was arrested on Thursday under Sections 65(2), 115(2), 137(2), and 351(3) of the BNS and POCSO," Kondey said. The minor went missing from her home and a police team rescued her on 24 June midnight. — *PTI*

4 Nihangs held for Karnaprayag clash get bail, Saini enters scene

DEHRADUN, 27 JUNE

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday stepped in to assuage protesting members of the Nihang sect who have threatened to march to Uttarakhand over the Karnaprayag clash, as the four Nihangs arrested in the case were granted bail.

The Nihangs, many of them from Punjab and Haryana, had postponed their march to Uttarakhand for two days on Friday and were camping at the Paonta Sahib gurudwara in Sirmaur, in HP.

A standoff at the Himachal-Uttarakhand border, where the Nihangs were stopped by police, had ended after talks with the Uttarakhand administration, which promised to fulfil their demands, including the release of the arrested Nihangs, according to their leader Jagdeep Singh Akali.

More members of the Sikh sect arrived on Saturday from the two states at the Paonta Sahib Gurdwara.

After a delegation from the Haryana Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (HSGPC) met him, Saini sent his political secretary, Tarun Bhandari, to the Paonta Sahib Gurudwara, where he met Sikh Jathas to explain the government's stance and highlight the chief minister's efforts to resolve the matter amicably.

Following discussions with the Sikh groups for several hours this morning, Bhandari told the media that Haryana CM has assured the Sikhs of a peaceful, speedy resolution to the dispute that arose after the clash between Nihangs and locals in Uttarakhand. —*PTI*

Nihang Sikhs interact with officials and a delegation from Punjab after ending their standoff at the Nagrasu Gurudwara in Rudraprayag—*PTI*

Fast patrol vessel ICGS Akshay commissioned

PANAJI, 27 JUNE

The Indian Coast Guard has formally commissioned ICGS Akshay, a new-generation indigenous fast patrol vessel built by Goa Shipyard Limited, in a ceremony at Vasco. The vessel aims to bolster maritime security, search and rescue, and coastal surveillance capabilities along India's vast coastline. The vessel was officially inducted into service in the presence of senior ICG officials, and representatives of Goa Shipyard Limited.

Designed and built under the Centre's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives, ICGS Akshay demonstrates India's growing indigenous shipbuilding prowess. Named "Akshay," meaning "indestructible," the vessel reflects the Coast Guard's dedication to safeguarding India's maritime interests.

The ship will be used for maritime law enforcement, coastal security, search and rescue, marine environmental protection, and assistance to mariners in distress. —*PTI*

OUR CHIEF'S APOLOGY DOESN'T MEAN WE KILLED NAGAS: KUKI-ZO

CHURACHANDPUR/ IMPHAL, 27 JUNE

A day after Kuki Zo Council (KZC) chairman Henlienthang Thanglet sought an apology for the killing of six Naga hostages in Manipur, the organisation said that certain portions of his remarks had been "misinterpreted as an admission of responsibility by the Kuki-Zo community."

In a statement on Friday, the KZC stated that the chairman's expression of sorrow was made purely in the spirit of compassion and "was not intended to assign collective guilt."

The clarification came as an influential Naga students' organisation expressed anger at the apology issued by the KZC chief over the killing of six Naga hostages in the state.The bodies of the six civilians who were abducted on 13 May from Leilon Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district were recovered on 10 June from an area near a Kuki Zo village. The recovery took place a day after 14 Kukis, who were abducted by armed groups in Senapati district nearly a month ago, were rel eased. — *PTI*

As the bodies of the six were recovered from Kuki-Zo people's areas, the Chairman apologised to the bereaved families—*PTI*

Advocate moves SC for national fire safety law

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

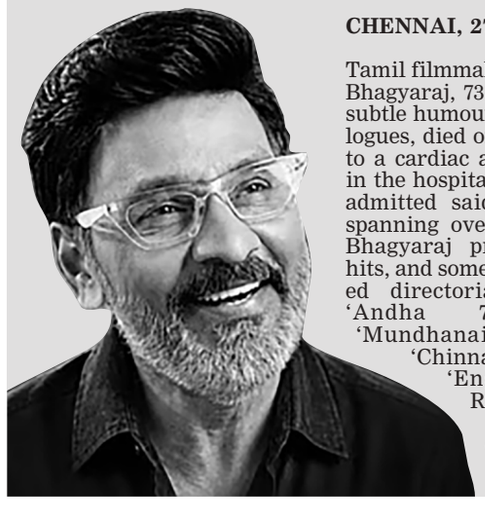
A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a national fire and life safety framework for high-risk public occupancy premises, like schools, hospitals, hotels, malls, coaching centres and restaurants. The petition, filed by advocate Narendra Goswami, cited the absence of a uniform enforceable national framework as a key reason for recurring fire tragedies. It referred to the 3 June fire at a Delhi bed-and-breakfast in Malviya Nagar that killed 21, and the 22 June blaze at a Lucknow building that left 15 dead and nine injured.

Advocate Goswami said, "The repeated occurrence of tragedies after warnings shows that isolated FIRs and post-facto committees are constitutionally insufficient. Article 21 requires prevention, not merely condolence,".

The plea sought directions to states and UTs to conduct fire safety audits of high-risk premises within three to four months and file district-wise data of premises lacking fire NOCs. —*PTI*

1953-2026

Bhagyaraj: The screenplay king of TN cinema



CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

Tamil filmmaker and actor K Bhagyaraj, 73, known for his subtle humour and witty dialogues, died on Saturday due to a cardiac arrest, a source in the hospital where he was admitted said. In a career spanning over five decades, Bhagyaraj produced many hits, and some of his celebrated directorial works are 'Andha 7 naatkal,' 'Mundhanai Mudichu,' 'Chinna Veedu,' and 'Enga Chinna Rasa.'

MG Ramachandran had declared K Bhagyaraj his 'kalai ulaga vaarisu' (artistic heir) and even attended his wedding—*PTI*

Bhagyaraj directed around 25 films and acted in around 75 movies. He was also widely regarded as one of the industry's finest screenwriters, with classics like 'Mundhanai Mudichu,' 'Andha 7 Naatkal' and 'Darling, Darling, Darling'.

He is survived by his wife, Poornima, and their children, actor Shanthanu and Saranya. Bhagyaraj was also the editor of the Tamil weekly magazine Bhagya, and has authored several novels.

"He attended the marriage of Khusboo's daughter in Goa. He was cheerful throughout. This morning, after returning from walking, he complained of chest pain and was rushed to hospital," actress Suhasini said.

DMK president Stalin described Bhagyaraj as an incredible director who was the uncrowned king of screenplays, and a writer who had the power to convey complex situations in short dialogues.

The Tamil Nadu government has announced state honours for the veteran filmmaker's final journey and funeral recognising his immense contribution to the Tamil film industry. — PTI

Bhagyaraj with his wife Poornima Bhagyaraj—*PTI*

BRIDGE CLOSURE SPARKS STIR

Residents block the Tiruchirappalli-Chennai National Highway at Sanjeevi Nagar on Saturday, demanding the speedy completion of maintenance work on the old Cauvery Bridge, whose closure has triggered severe traffic congestion. Protesters also renewed their long-pending demand for a flyover, while traffic police intervened to pacify the demonstrators. The bridge, shut for three months by the NHAI for repairs, has left commuters stranded in traffic stretching nearly three kilometres —SCREENGRAB

SC calls safe walking a right. But where are the footpaths?

Vehicles parked on and along a footpath obstruct pedestrian movement on a busy road, at Laxmi Nagar, in New Delhi on Saturday —PTI

Every day in Delhi thousands of people step off broken pavements, squeeze past rows of parked vehicles, dodge speeding traffic and search for a safe place to cross. The everyday struggle of walking in the capital has been thrown into sharp relief by a Supreme Court ruling that declared the right to walk on designated footpaths a fundamental right.

In a judgment delivered in a motor-accident compensation case involving the death of a five-year-old boy, a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and A S Chandurkar held that the citizen's right to use footpaths falls within the freedoms guaranteed under Article 19(1)(d) and the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The court said pedestrians must take precedence over motor vehicles and that footpaths are primarily for walkers.

Senior advocate Ashok K Singh said the judgment could spur meaningful change by reinforcing the constitutional duty of authorities to protect pedestrian spaces. "This judgment is likely to create greater public awareness about the rights of pedestrians. It will also strengthen the process of removing encroachments and reinforce the idea that authorities are fulfilling their constitutional obligation to protect public spaces and ensure safe mobility for citizens," he told PTI Videos.

Singh alleged the problem is particularly acute in areas under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). "In Delhi, you will find that both the MCD and NDMC have effectively turned footpaths into parking spaces. Vehicles are lined up along these footpaths, leaving little or no room for pedestrians to walk," he said.

Official data suggests the scale of the problem. Between January and March this year, the Delhi Traffic Police issued 430,202 on-the-spot challans for improper or obstructive parking, making it the city's most common traffic violation. Residents meanwhile tell of footpaths being used as de facto parking lots, with operators handing drivers parking slips — sometimes under NDMC-authorised arrangements — within seconds of a vehicle halting on the pavement.

"There is a great deal of inconvenience," said Delhi resident Roshan Kumar. "The government had earlier spoken about taking action against this issue, but the problem has only become more visible over time. There is simply no space left for people to walk." Kumar recalled narrowly avoiding an accident while walking with his child because the footpath was entirely obstructed.

For many pedestrians the burden is daily and tangible. "These footpath parking arrangements themselves are problematic. A large number of vehicles are parked here, even though there is no legitimate reason for them to occupy the footpath," said Sanjay Kumar. "In many areas, you can hardly see the footpath at all."

Academic research paints a similarly bleak picture. A study titled "Perceptions of pedestrian safety in Delhi: a Rasch analysis approach", conducted by the Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Centre at IIT Delhi in collaboration with University College London, found that nearly 44 per cent of Delhi's roads do not have footpaths. Researchers surveyed 426 pedestrians across eight wards in south Delhi in 2022, covering roads near metro stations, bus stops and markets.

The study found that 12 of the 15 conditions used to assess the pedestrian environment were perceived as unsafe. These included fast-moving traffic, a lack of crossings near bus stops, parked vehicles near crossings, two-wheelers and cars on footpaths, poor lighting, absence of CCTV cameras, lack of police presence, and the dangers of walking after sunset. Footpaths were often uneven, the height wrong, or removed altogether during roadworks, the report said.

Professor Geetam Tiwari of IIT Delhi, a co-author, warned that foot-overbridges are not a panacea. "Footoverbridges are not a solution for most people. Even globally, pedestrians tend to avoid them, as they are tiring and inconvenient, especially for older people," she said. The study also highlighted the poor connectivity between bus stops and safe crossings. "People do not always walk to the signal. If the bus stop is far, they tend to cross the road from where they are," Tiwari explained, increasing exposure to risk.

Women felt less safe than men, the researchers found, particularly where parked vehicles, missing guardrails and poor lighting prevailed. The study also drew attention to "captive pedestrians" — those who walk not by choice but because they cannot afford private transport and have no household access to a vehicle. These pedestrians often walk longer distances and prioritise shorter, riskier routes over safer ones because they have no alternative.

Lead author Neba C Tony said captive pedestrians' voices are seldom heard in policy discussions. "This is a serious problem which needs immediate attention," she said, recounting an encounter near Okhla Railway Station where a pedestrian chose to cross railway tracks rather than take a much longer walking route.

The human cost is stark. According to Delhi Police, around 649 pedestrians were killed and 1,738 injured in road accidents in 2025. Private cars accounted for the highest number of pedestrian deaths at 92, followed by twowheelers at 75 and heavy goods vehicles at 43. The IIT Delhi study found pedestrians accounted for 43 per cent of the 1,461 fatal road crashes recorded in Delhi in 2022. —PTI

SALAR سالار

Maya Joint hopes to spoil Serena's Wimbledon party

Maya Joint admits her cheering section will be modest when she steps onto one of tennis' grandest stages for the biggest match of her career against childhood idol Serena Williams at Wimbledon.

The 20-year-old Australian said she expects only her tennis coach, fitness coach, agent and her mother to be in the stands when she faces the seven-time Wimbledon champion in the opening round on Tuesday.

Joint, ranked World No. 53, has been handed the daunting task of facing Williams in the American great's highly anticipated return to singles at the All England Club after nearly four years away from the tour.

The Michigan-born Australian, who represents Australia through her father, knows she will likely walk into a packed Centre Court crowd eager to witness Williams launch another memorable Wimbledon campaign.

"I'm expecting big serves and big forehands," Joint said. "I'm expecting shorter rallies, just from how hard she hits the ball. I'll have to be really ready for the first couple of games and try to get a good start to maybe catch her off guard a little bit."

Despite the challenge, Joint is relishing the opportunity to compete against one of the sport's greatest players.

"I have so much respect for her. She was one of my idols growing up. I'm just really excited to have the opportunity to play against her," she said.

The contrast between the two players is striking. Williams won seven Grand Slam singles titles and completed a career Grand Slam before Joint was even born in 2006.

Joint has steadily risen through the rankings over the past two seasons, announcing herself on the Grand Slam stage as a qualifier at the 2024 US Open. She defeated Laura Siegemund in the opening round before pushing Madison Keys in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

She also impressed earlier this year at the United Cup, where she tested World No. 1 Iga wi tek.

Joint believes her experience against Keys under the lights in New York has helped prepare her for the atmosphere she is likely to encounter at Wimbledon.

"When I saw that she got a wild card to get back into singles, there was always a part of me that wanted to experience playing against her," she said.

However, 2026 has been far from straightforward for the Australian. She endured a run of 10 consecutive defeats before ending the streak with a first-round victory at a WTA 125 clay-court event in Croatia earlier this month.

Even so, Joint remains confident she can cause an upset.

"Any match is winnable. I've gotten a lot closer in my past couple of matches, I've been getting closer in the score," she said. "Serena is still an amazing player, so I'm sure it's going to be a difficult match, but I also think that I have a chance to win."

Former Australian No. 1 Ajla Tomljanovi , the last player to defeat Williams in singles during what was then considered her farewell tournament at the 2022 US Open, believes Joint should embrace the occasion.

"I'm excited. It's going to be such a fun experience for Maya," Tomljanovi said.

"Maya can go into it really feeling like she's got nothing to lose and so much to gain, but at the same time there's that true belief that she can win, and she's in a good position to win if she plays her game."

Tomljanovi revealed she crossed paths with Joint after the draw but was not asked for advice on facing Williams.

"I saw her this morning — she didn't ask me anything, but that's Maya for you," she said. "She's quite introverted but the more time you spend with her she's very quirky, she's funny. She's very professional. She likes to stay in her bubble with her team."

Joint did, however, reveal that Tomljanovi offered some words of encouragement, telling her that "I can beat anyone".

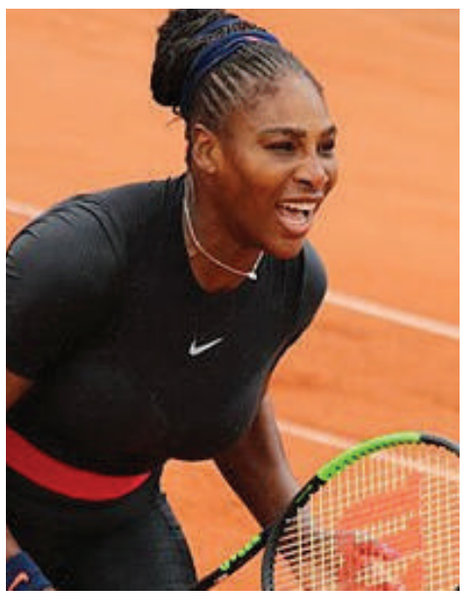
Asked who should be considered the favourite given Williams' lengthy absence from competitive singles, Joint refused to speculate.

"That's a difficult question. I try not to think of what other people think will happen," she said.

"Tennis is a crazy sport. Anything can happen. It just depends who's better on that day, so we'll see Tuesday."

Whatever the outcome, Joint is determined to make the most of a rare opportunity against one of the sport's all-time greats.

"Maybe I can win a couple of people over," she said. —PTI



The seven-time Wimbledon champion Serena Williams will face the 20-year-old Maya Joint in the opening round on Tuesday —WIKIPEDIA

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Europe is battling record breaking heatwave. What's making it so severe?

—MAGNIFIC

Sweltering temperatures are shattering records across Europe, as the continent battles a deadly heatwave.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, France endured its hottest days in history. Wednesday was the United Kingdom's warmest June day on record. And according to early data, Spain, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland have all broken June temperature records at several sites. And the event is not over yet.

But this historic heatwave is not happening in isolation. It comes days after the global sea surface temperature again reached record levels. Meanwhile, Australia's weather bureau has declared El Nino active, making a hotter, drier year in Australia, Asia and the South Pacific much more likely. And since April, India and Pakistan have been battling a sustained and ultimately deadly heatwave.

SO WHAT'S DRIVING THIS LATEST HEATWAVE?

AN UNUSUAL HEATWAVE

A heatwave occurs when the average temperature is unusually hot for three or more days in a row. That's compared to past weather data taken from the same location.But scientists are losing sleep over the current European heatwave, for two main reasons.

—MAGNIFIC

1. Timing

In Europe, the hottest time of year comes in mid- to late July, about a month after the summer solstice. However, recent research suggests days of intense heat stress are now starting to arrive in June – weeks before the peak of the European summer.

Current evidence shows climate change is making heatwaves more frequent and intense. One study examined the heatwave that hit south-east England in June 2025. It found that without the effect of human-made greenhouse gas emissions, such a heatwave would only happen once every 50 years. But when the researchers accounted for the temperature increase of 1.3°C caused by human-induced climate change, this became at least once every five years.

2. Severity

In a world without climate change, this extreme heatwave would rarely if ever happen so early in the year. And it also would not be toppling temperature records, and by such staggering amounts.

Tuesday and Wednesday were France's hottest days since records began in 1947, with an average temperature of 29.9°C across the country. On Tuesday, 147 French towns hit all-time highs for June, with 41 local weather stations recording figures above 43°C.

France also slept through its warmest night ever from Tuesday into Wednesday, with a national average temperature of 21.6°C. The overnight heat was enough to make some rivers so warm they could not be safely used to cool nuclear power plants.

In the same week, Spain also set multiple daytime and nighttime records, with one location enduring three consecutive nights of 30°C or above. Parts of Spain have seen temperatures surpass 45°C.

What caused it?

Heatwaves occur when a high-pressure system settles over a region. These systems act as "lids" that trap heat and push it closer to the surface. They also disperse clouds to allow more sunlight to stream in.

On a broader scale, climate change from the burning of oil, coal and gas is reshaping how and when heatwaves form. This is because the additional heat trapped in the atmosphere also changes large-scale weather patterns, which typically move east to west, allowing more slow-moving high-pressure systems to form. This in turn increases the risk of heatwaves.

Research shows in the five decades between 1950 and 1999, Europe endured five intense heatwaves. Between 2000 and 2021, there were 18 such heatwaves.

Add to that the extreme heatwaves of 2022, 2023 and 2025, and this figure rises to 20 severe heatwaves in 25 years.

How are people coping?

This heatwave has already tragically claimed dozens of lives in France, where people have drowned.

According to the European Climate Risk Assessment, heatwaves already pose a critical health risk to people across southern Europe. And in coming years, communities in southern and western-central Europe will be most at risk of heat-related illness and death.

What makes this heatwave so severe is the combination of extreme temperatures and high humidity, which is completely unlike the typical dry summers experienced in southern Australia. Children and the elderly are most at risk of heat-related illness. Their bodies are less able to evaporate sweat and regulate their internal temperature.

For these populations, extreme heat coupled with humidity can be life-threatening. —*The Conversation*

QUOTE of THE DAY

To be a great nation, you have to have religion and God. If you don't have that, it just doesn't seem to work out, does it?... Religion is back in our country bigger and stronger than it has been in many, many years

—DONALD TRUMP,
US President

Iran accuses US of breaching peace MoU

IRGC says Hormuz 'hotline' is for politics, not military

TEHRAN, 27 JUNE

Iran on Saturday condemned US airstrikes on several sites along its southern coast, accusing Washington of violating the recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at ending the conflict and asserting its right to respond under international law.

In a statement, Iran's Foreign Ministry described Friday night's attacks by the "US army" on coastal surveillance facilities as a "blatant violation" of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and a breach of the June 18 MoU intended to end hostilities. The ministry also accused the United States of backing Israeli attacks on Lebanon, saying they too violated the agreement.

Reaffirming Iran's right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Tehran said its armed forces had carried out retaliatory strikes against targets linked to US forces to defend the country's sovereignty, security and national interests. It warned that responsibility for any consequences rested with the "treaty-breaking" United States and those assisting its military actions.

Iran urged Gulf states not to allow their territory or facilities to be used for attacks against it and called on the UN Secretary-General, the Security Council and other international bodies to act against what it described as US violations of international law.

Iran said that all transit through the Strait of Hormuz must be conduct through routes it approves of, an assertion that the US has been against —*PRESS TV*

Separately, an IRGC security source confirmed that Iran and the United States had established a political communication channel concerning the Strait of Hormuz, stressing it was not a military hotline or a mechanism for operational coordination.

The source said the channel was intended to reduce the risk of incidents in the strategic waterway, through which around one-fifth of global oil supplies pass.

However, Tehran maintained that all vessels must use routes officially designated by Iran and said the communication link did not alter its sovereign authority over the Strait.

"Any transit through the Strait must be conducted via routes officially declared by Iran," the source added.

The latest developments come days after the US and Iran signed an interim MoU providing for the safe passage of commercial vessels through Hormuz.

Iran has repeatedly insisted that any future arrangements governing the strategic waterway must recognise its rights as a coastal state. —*Agencies*

Hezbollah supporters began protesting in Beirut after Israel and Lebanon inked a peace agreement —*SCREENGRAB*

Israel-Lebanon ink pact; Hezbollah warns of civil war

WASHINGTON, 27 JUNE

"Israel will remain in the security zone in southern Lebanon as Hezbollah is not disarmed. This is also a major blow to Iran
-Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli PM

Israel and Lebanon's ambassadors to the US on Friday inked a framework agreement that was described as a first step towards peace, that the militant Hezbollah declared was "null" and should be replaced by the Iran-US MoU.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the State Department said that process for dismantling Hezbollah and for Lebanon to regain territory that was taken by Israeli forces as they battled the militant group. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would continue to maintain a "security zone" in the territory that the IDF has seized recently until Hezbollah disarms. The Lebanese Army, however, would be allowed to return to two "pilot areas" in southern Lebanon.

"In other words, we are maintaining the original security zone at all times, outside the range of anti-tank missiles," Netanyahu added. Israel controls around 15 per cent of Lebanese soil, with around 1 million people displaced from their homes.

The US will facilitate a newly created "Military Coordination Group for Lebanon" to implement the framework, the State Department said, while committing USD 100 million in humanitarian assistance.

However, Hezbollah warned of a "civil war" if the deal was implemented. Hezbollah was not party to the agreement.

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem called the deal "humiliating, shameful, and a surrender of sovereignty" and said the group and "will not abandon" armed struggle. He accused the Lebanese government of legitimising Israel's occupation "for many years to come". —*Agencies*

Pilot killed after plane crashes into Beijing's high-rise

BEIJING, 27 JUNE

A pilot was killed and 13 people were injured after a two-seat light aircraft crashed into Beijing's tallest building, the 108-storey CITIC Tower, on Friday evening, Chinese authorities said on Saturday. The Sunward SA60L Aurora struck the skyscraper in Chaoyang district at about 5:55 pm after taking off from an airport around 50 km east of Beijing. The pilot was the only person aboard. Authorities have not disclosed the cause of the crash, which is under investigation, or whether the injured were inside the building or struck by debris. Photos showed damage to the tower's glass facade. —*PTI*

WB provides $1.1B emergency support to B'desh

DHAKA, 27 JUNE

The World Bank has approved USD 1.1 billion for two projects to help Bangladesh mitigate price and supply volatility in global fertiliser and fuel markets, sustain food security, and enable rapid response. Jean Pesme, World Bank Division Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, said rising prices from the West Asia conflict have deeply impacted Bangladesh's economy. USD 300 million Emergency Support is allocated for a Food Security Project, for fertiliser imports critical for rice seasons, covering 1.4 million hectares. —*PTI*

Burkina Faso cuts diplomatic ties with France

OUAGADOUGOU, 27 JUNE

Burkina Faso's military government has severed diplomatic relations with France, its former colonial ruler and key security partner, citing "blatant neo-colonial ambitions" and support for subversive networks. France's Foreign Ministry expressed regret, calling it a "hostile and unfounded decision," and said reciprocal measures are under review. The West African nation, battered by years of violence from extremist groups linked to al-Qaida and ISIS, accused France of working against its interests. Relations have been strained for years; in 2023, the junta asked France to recall its ambassador and expelled French diplomats in 2024. —*PTI*

Polygamous sect leader convicted for child sex abuse

PHOENIX, 27 JUNE

A polygamous sect leader, Samuel Bateman, previously serving a 50-year sentence for child sex offences, has been convicted on state child abuse charges. Girls aged 11 to 14 were discovered in a trailer he was transporting through Arizona. The trailer, enclosed with a makeshift toilet, sofa, and camping chairs, was stopped after authorities received a tip. Bateman was convicted of coercing girls as young as nine into sex acts and attempting to kidnap girls from protective custody. He claimed to have 20 "spiritual wives," including ten under 18. The jury took about 40 minutes to find him guilty on all counts.—*PTI*

4 days on, 51,000 still missing after Venezuela earthquakes

LA GUAIRA, 27 JUNE

Venezuelans on Friday were racing against the clock to rescue at least 51,000 people who are still missing after the devasting 7.2 and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes brought down apartments and homes four days ago.

Authorities have confirmed 920 deaths, but that is likely to rise exponentially. Aid agencies consider the first 48 to 72 hours to be a crucial time frame to retrieve people alive, though that can be extended if they have access to food and water.

Access has been restricted to La Guaira, the epicentre of the destruction, as chaos and traffic began to hamper search efforts.

"Each person saved is a miracle," said Jorge Rodríguez, president of the National Assembly. "We are not going to hide absolutely anything about the magnitude of this tragedy."

Government forces distributed food and water to survivors in La Guaira, and acting President Delcy Rodríguez said her government was mounting a full response during these "critical hours for rescuing people alive."

Averting the long-term consequences is also a massive challenge. The International Organisation for Migration said up to 6.76 million people could be affected, some 2 million of them in Caracas alone.

Rescuers believe that the first 48 to 72 hours are the critical period when people can be found —*PTI*

STRONG QUAKE ROCKS AFGHAN, PAK

A magnitude 5.9 earthquake rocked Pakistan and Afghanistan, with its epicentre in the Hindu Kush mountains. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. —*PTI*

UK to open new routes for refugees

LONDON, 27 JUNE

On Friday, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said Britain will begin legal routes for eligible refugees while also tightening human rights laws to enable deportations of illegal migrants.

The new routes will allow community groups, universities and employers to sponsor refugees to come to the UK. According to the authorities, this was inspired by the "community sponsorship" programme in Canada, which has settled 4,00,000 people in the country since 1979.

The law will also narrow family definitions, limit human rights claims and crack down on bothersome appeals.

The announcement came as Mahmood faces questions about her future after Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced his resignation on Monday. —*PTI*

Ex-NSA Bolton pleads guilty to mishandling classified intel

GREENBELT, 27 JUNE

Former US National Security Adviser John Bolton has pleaded guilty to illegally retaining classified information, a move that could help him avoid a lengthy prison sentence. Bolton, 77, who served under President Donald Trump before becoming a vocal critic, will be sentenced on 28 October by a federal court in Maryland.

He admitted to one count of mishandling national defence information, carrying a maximum 10-year sentence, though prosecutors agreed to recommend a five-year cap. Under the plea deal, Bolton will pay USD 2.25 million, forfeit his federal retirement benefits, undergo a debriefing and complete up to 100 hours of community service. Prosecutors said he knowingly endangered national security by sharing classified notes while writing his memoir. However, investigators found no evidence that his relatives further disclosed the information. —*PTI*

Ukraine strikes military complex in Russia

A Russian drone strike killed a man in Ukraine's summy region —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

KYIV, 27 JUNE

Ukraine struck a major military-industrial facility in Russia's Volgograd region on Saturday, while a Russian drone attack killed a 66-year-old man in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region overnight.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said FP-5 Flamingo missiles hit the Titan-Barrikady complex, which manufactures artillery systems and components for Iskander-M missile launchers used in attacks on Ukrainian cities.

Volgograd Governor Andrei Bocharov confirmed an attack on an industrial site in the Krasnooktyabrsky district, saying 10 people were injured and production facilities were damaged, but did not identify the company.

The strike followed one of Ukraine's largest drone attacks of the war, with Russia claiming it intercepted 660 drones over 12 regions, Crimea and surrounding seas.

Zelenskyy recently ordered a "40-day influence operation," signalling intensified strikes aimed at forcing Russia to end the war.

Meanwhile, Sumy regional authorities said a Russian drone struck a private home overnight, killing one man. Ukraine has increasingly targeted Russian military industries and energy infrastructure to weaken Moscow's war effort. —*PTI*

Indian firm, CEO sanctioned for 'fuelling' Sudan war

WASHINGTON, 27 JUNE

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned eight individuals and entities, including an Indian national and his company, for allegedly "fuelling" the civil war in Sudan.

OFAC on Friday said the targeted networks enabled the government's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intensify the war.

It sanctioned Alok Choudhari, the CEO of SBL Energy Limited, also known as Amin Explosive Private Limited, accusing him and his company of supplying than 200 shipments of explosives and related materials to Sudan-based Target Multiactivities Company (TMAC), which supports the SAF's arsenal. TMAC and its general manager, Tariq Hussain Muhammad Madani, were also sanctioned.

OFAC also sanctioned Ports Engineering Company Ltd. It reportedly imported military uniforms, footwear and weapons for Sudanese intelligence from a company in the United Arab Emirates and a Turkish firm. The restrictions also targeted transnational networks that recruits Colombian mercenaries to fight alongside the RSF. —*PTI*

MYANMAR'S PRODUCTION RISES

Afghanistan's opium cultivation dops 95%: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

Once the world's leading producer of opium, Afghanistan has cut down its cultivation by 95 per cent, according to the latest UN report released on Friday.

However, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2026 states that this may result in drug traffickers shifting to more dangerous synthetic drugs.

According to the report, opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has fallen from an estimated 232,000 hectares in 2022 to 10,200 hectares in 2025. Opium production declined from about 6,200 metric tons before the Taliban banned its cultivation to 296 metric tons last year. The collapse has driven global illicit opium production to its lowest level in decades.

Afghanistan was once the leading producer of illegal opium, but has now cut it by 95%. However, the UN warns that this is simply reshaping the global illegal drug market —*UN*

Notably, Myanmar has become the leading global cultivator of poppy. According to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) 2025 report, India has become a prime destination for the contraband.

Myanmar's opium production increased by over 50 per cent between 2020-24, with the area under poppy cultivation reaching 45,200 hectares.

India shares a 1,643km with Myanmar, and the Free Movement Regime (FMR), particularly across Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, has become the "single most important substitute supply zone for the global gap left by Afghanistan collapse," the NCRB report stated.

The NCRB also stated that "Encrypted messaging platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp and Signal" are becoming significant platforms for "drug distribution globally".

The UNODC adds that while the Taliban has cracked down on opium, drug use is increasingly shifting from traditional drugs such as hashish and opium to synthetic drugs like methamphetamine and tablet K. —*Salar News*

Internal business financial controls are necessity: ICAI

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Strong internal financial controls should be viewed as a business necessity rather than a compliance requirement, ICAI President Prasanna Kumar said, amid rising concerns around corporate governance and risk management practices."Internal control mechanism is not a matter of compliance. It is a matter of self-interest. Any entrepreneur should have an internal financial control mechanism," said Kumar. He also said auditors provide an opinion on whether financial statements present a true and fair view, based on available information and the audit scope. Internal controls are fundamental to any business and help organisations identify risks, prevent leakages and strengthen decision-making. The comments come against the backdrop of recent governance lapses in the financial sector.—*PTI*

US approves limited rollout of Claude Mythos 5 AI

Anthropic, US govt expected to talk to restore Fable 5

SAN FRANCISCO, 27 JUNE

The Unites States government has authorised a limited release of Anthropic's advanced AI model, Mythos 5, allowing a select group of American cybersecurity firms and infrastructure providers to access it after national security concerns led to its suspension.

Anthropic said on Friday it had received approval to restore access to Mythos 5 and would continue discussions with Unites States authorities to eventually restore public availability of its less powerful Fable 5 model.

The decision partially reverses restrictions imposed on 12 June, when the government ordered Anthropic to disable access to both models after identifying vulnerabilities in safeguards designed to prevent misuse.

According to CNN, Unites States Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick informed Anthropic on Friday that the company had addressed risks associated with the advanced AI models. "I have determined that appropriate safeguards are in place to permit certain trusted partners to access the Claude Mythos 5 Model," Lutnick wrote.

Anthropic confirmed the development, saying, "We received notice from the US government that Mythos 5, our strongest cybersecurity model, can be redeployed to a small group of cyber defenders and infrastructure providers.

Discussions between Anthropic and the government are expected to continue over the weekend to restore access to Fable 5 as well.

The restrictions on Anthropic came amid growing concerns that advanced AI systems could be exploited by hackers and other malicious actors to rapidly identify and exploit cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

Earlier on Friday, rival OpenAI launched its GPT-5.6 model with access restricted on a client-by-client basis under government validation. The moves follow an executive order signed by US President Donald Trump earlier this month establishing a voluntary federal review process for advanced AI models to assess national security risks before release.

However, the Unites States White House has only disclosed a few details about how the review system will operate or which AI models will fall under its scope. —*Agencies*

HEADED UBER FOR 11 YEARS

Ex-Uber veteran to lead OpenAI's India push

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

From steering Uber's ride-hailing business across India and South Asia to powering OpenAI's big, bold bets in one of the fastest-growing AI markets, **Prabhjeet Singh** is stepping into one of the most closely-watched leadership roles in India's artificial intelligence ecosystem.

Sam Altman-led OpenAI on Friday named Singh as its Managing Director for India, making him the company's top executive in the country as it deepens its investments and doubles down on the India game plan.

Singh joins OpenAI after an 11-year stint at Uber — the last six years as President for India and South Asia — where he led the company's mobility business across India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, steering its expansion in one of the world's fastest-growing ride-hailing markets. On Friday, Uber confirmed his departure, saying he was leaving for another leadership opportunity.

As OpenAI's "most senior leader" in India, Singh will be responsible for consumer growth, enterprise adoption and partnerships, regulatory engagement, and operations. His focus will also include building partnerships and supporting India's broader AI ecosystem, while helping consumers, businesses, institutions, and government bodies benefit from AI.

Singh's appointment comes as OpenAI moves its India strategy to the top gear through partnerships with enterprises and developers, while strengthening engagement with policymakers. The company opened its first office in New Delhi in November 2025.

Altman has repeatedly described India as one of OpenAI's key markets, praising the country's rapid AI uptake and commitment to investing across the tech stack. —*PTI*

External legal review clears HDFC Bank board

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

An independent legal review has found no evidence supporting concerns raised by former HDFC Bank chairman **Atanu Chakraborty**, who resigned citing ethical issues.

The review, conducted by Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati and Wadia Ghandy & Co over three months, examined Board records, meeting minutes, and interviews with senior staff.

It stated, "Having now completed an extensive legal review, the external law firms found that Chakraborty's statements were not substantiated by the record and witness interviews."

The firms noted that board meeting minutes provided Chakraborty opportunities to express concerns, but he did not do so.

Regarding the Dubai matter, the review found no evidence Chakraborty raised concerns on board decisions on the issue.

Following his resignation, the bank terminated three employees at its Dubai International Financial Centre branch for client onboarding gaps —*PTI*

WON'T SEEK EXTENSION

Kotak Bank MD to quit after 3-year tenure on 31 December

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday said MD and CEO Ashok Vaswani will not seek re-appointment when his term ends on 31 December 2026.

Vaswani, a veteran banker who previously worked with Barclays and Citigroup, assumed charge as MD and CEO on 1 January 2024.

Vaswani has informed the board that, for personal reasons, he does not wish to seek re-appointment upon completion of his current term.

Vaswani replaced Dipak Gupta, who had served as interim MD and CEO after founder-director Uday Kotak stepped down as head of the bank on 1 September 2023 — four months ahead of his scheduled retirement.

For the quarter ended March, Kotak reported a 10 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 5,423 crore as against Rs 4,933 crore in the same period a year ago.

On a standalone basis, it reported a 13 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit at Rs 4,027 crore. Net interest income of the bank increased 8 per cent to Rs 7,876 crore from Rs 7,284 crore a year ago.

Net interest margin improved to 4.67 per cent from 4.54 per cent in the December quarter. —*PTI*

Persistent Systems to acquire Nagarro for $1.3 billion

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Persistent Systems announced on Saturday its plan to acquire German digital engineering firm Nagarro, creating a global AI-led digital engineering powerhouse with a revenue of USD 2.9 billion.

The merger is described as a "perfect strategic fit," combining Persistent's AI-led engineering leadership, North American scale, and partnership depth with Nagarro's European business, verticals, AI expertise, and capabilities in ERP and customer experience (CX) delivery, according to a statement.

The combined group would have over 46,000 employees across more than 40 countries, including approximately 37,000 in India, nearly 3,500 in North America, and around 3,000 in Europe, the statement added. Galaxy Germany Holding SE, a wholly owned subsidiary of Persistent Systems Limited, announced a voluntary public takeover offer for all Nagarro shares at EUR 81 per share. This follows the signing of a Business Combination Agreement. —*PTI*

ONLY 14% OF INDIA'S MSMES HAVE CREDIT ACCESS: DELOITTE

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Despite the digital finance boom, only 14 per cent of India's MSMEs access formal credit, leaving many dependent on informal lenders, according to Deloitte's State of Financial Services report.

The report states, "Only 14 per cent of MSMEs have access to formal credit." It emphasises this as a critical issue for economic growth and financial inclusion.

India's MSME credit gap is estimated at Rs 25 lakh crore as of March 2025, potentially exceeding Rs 50 lakh crore when considering GDP contribution. While 89 per cent of adults have a financial account, only 15 per cent access formal credit, and insurance penetration is just 3.7 per cent of GDP.

The report urges reforms to scale MSME lending through the Account Aggregator framework, improve financial literacy, expand insurance, and narrow digital gaps to promote broader economic participation and resilience. —*ANI*

Assam rolls out 'Farmer IDs' to small tea growers

GUWAHATI, 27 JUNE

Small tea growers in Assam will now be able to register on the Farmers' Registry Portal and access government benefits through a single platform, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The growers will be issued Farmer IDs to avail fertilisers, benefits, institutional credit and other agricultural services. While the tea sector remains under the Industry Department, this move allows small tea growers to access benefits from the Agriculture Department.

The Farmer ID system aims to ensure timely fertiliser distribution, easier access to schemes, reduce middlemen exploitation, and facilitate institutional credit.

Agriculture Minister Pijush Hazarika highlighted that small tea growers contribute nearly half of Assam's tea production, and inclusion in the portal will seamlessly connect eligible growers to government support.

According to Tea Board India data, Assam had 1,33,864 small tea growers cultivating 1,26,107.64 hectares as of March 2025. —*PTI*

Private firms using 'unfair competition' to stop Bharat Taxi, says Shah

GANDHINAGAR, 27 JUNE

Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday alleged that private ride-hailing companies are using "unfair competition" by slashing fares to prevent the cooperative mobility platform Bharat Taxi from gaining a foothold.

Launching Bharat Taxi in 14 Gujarat cities, Shah dismissed reports that the platform's fares are higher, claiming rival companies had reduced fares only after Bharat Taxi entered the market.

"They want to stop Bharat Taxi and then return to operating arbitrarily," he said.

Bharat Taxi, India's first cooperative-led, driver-owned ride-hailing service, follows a zero-commission model under which drivers retain the full fare as platform owners.

Shah accused private aggregators of exploiting both drivers and passengers through commission deductions, delayed payments and arbitrary suspension of drivers without giving them a hearing.

He said Bharat Taxi was created to end such practices and ensure that neither drivers nor customers were exploited.

The service has been launched in Gujarat for two-wheelers, auto-rickshaws and four-wheelers. Bharat Taxi also signed MoUs with the Gujarat Metro Rail Corporation, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, Gujarat State Cooperative Bank, traffic police, airports and Western Railway to expand operations.

Shah said the platform would enter cities including Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Lucknow, Chandigarh and Jaipur before 31 July, with plans to expand to more than 500 cities and towns across India within two years. —*PTI*

GTRI calls for guidelines on new quality certification framework

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has called on the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to issue comprehensive operational guidelines detailing eligibility, documentation, and processing timelines for companies seeking product quality certification under the new transition facilitation mechanism.

On 25 June, DPIIT notified the Transition Facilitation (Quality Control) Order, 2026, creating an alternative compliance pathway under ten Quality Control Orders (QCOs), including toys, PPE, air conditioners, footwear, furniture, hinges, and household appliances.

Applications will be assessed by an Implementation Committee chaired by DPIIT and including representatives from BIS, the Department of Commerce, and other ministries.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said, "The reform is expected to reduce operational problems by easing dependence on BIS factory inspections, but critics argue it merely replaces one regulatory hurdle with another."

He emphasised that transparent, digital processes with clear timelines are essential for success. —*PTI*

Piyush Goyal launches UK-India CETA business manual in London

LONDON, 27 JUNE

Union Minister **Piyush Goyal** launched the "UK-India CETA Business Utilisation Manual," a practical guide for Indian and UK firms to leverage the upcoming trade agreement. The manual, created by the UK India Business Council and HSBC India, is a comprehensive resource translating the complex deal into actionable steps.

It was unveiled at an event organised by FICCI and supported by UKIBC, bringing together senior business leaders. The UK and India have underscored their partnership, with bilateral trade reaching around £47.9 billion (USD 56-60 billion) in the last quarter, a 10 per cent increase.

HSBC India's CEO Hitendra Dave described the guide as essential for navigating the deal, while UKIBC's Kishore Jayaraman called it a "practical roadmap" for businesses to harness the agreement's full potential.

The UKIBC aims to support businesses in expanding and exploring trade opportunities across both markets. —*ANI*

2,000 GW capacity vital for energy security: Adani

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Adani Green Energy has called for faster electrification combined with large-scale storage to provide reliable, affordable, and clean power, emphasising it as an energy security imperative.

Executive Director Sagar Adani spoke at the inaugural Adani Green Energy Dialogue in London, where policymakers, investors, and climate experts discussed accelerating the energy transition.

Adani highlighted the importance of pairing renewable energy with storage technologies aiming for 50 GW capacity by 2030, including the world's largest plant at Khavda, Gujarat.

The Adani Group plans to invest over USD 100 billion into energy transition projects, including nuclear power development. —*PTI*

AI BUBBLE FEARS

AI malinvestment, not chip supply, will end current tech cycle: Report

NEW DELHI, 17 JUNE

The biggest risk to the AI-driven tech rally is not a sudden jump in semiconductor supply but a "sudden realisation by investors that the hyperscalers and the likes of OpenAI and Anthropic will not be able to make a return on their investment," according to latest research report by Jefferies.

The brokerage argued that "for now at least, there remains zero sign of AI capex slowing," yet warns that funding concerns could "trigger a sudden unwillingness to fund these investments which will then be aggravated by the circular arrangements between the main players, such as Nvidia financing OpenAI to buy its chips."

According to the firm's GREED & fear report, "this new model is almost equal to Anthropic as a competitor for the corporate market and is just one quarter of the cost in terms of cost per token."

This release aligns with a growing "reaction against tokenmaxxing," which Jefferies warns could "lead to a slowdown in Anthropic's up until now remarkable revenue growth ahead of its planned IPO." Ahead of this projected cooling, Anthropic's annualised run-rate revenue had "surged from USD 9 billion at the end of 2025 to USD 47 billion in May." The report highlights a clear shift in usage toward Chinese models.

The brokerage also highlighted enterprise feedback indicating that "GLM-5.2 proves enterprises no longer have to sacrifice intelligence for privacy." The report pointed to a "massive acceleration in companies pulling their AI workloads back onto local corporate servers."

Jefferies is increasing tech hardware exposure across portfolios. "Hynix and Kioxia will be included in the global long-only portfolio with an initial 4 per cent weighting each...while the existing investment in Samsung will be increased by one percentage," the report said.

On Taiwan, Jefferies noted "boom-like conditions" with real GDP up 14.55 per cent YoY in 1Q26. TSMC capex is forecast to rise to USD 56bn in 2026 and USD 65-70 billion in 2027, with AI expected to account for 31% of TSMC's revenue this year. —*PTI*

Cape Verde smallest country to enter World Cup knockout round

HOUSTON, 27 JUNE

Tiny Cape Verde defied odds to become the smallest country to earn a spot in the World Cup knockout round behind the stellar play of Vozinha, the 40-year-old goalkeeper who embodied the grit of his nation.

"We are small," he said. "But we have big hearts and we are fighters."

Cape Verde completed an improbable run through the group stage with a third straight World Cup draw, a 0-0 draw against Saudi Arabia on Friday night to advance in the tournament.

The small island nation off the western coast of Africa, which is making its debut on soccer's grandest stage, already held 2010 champion Spain to a 0-0 draw and then came from behind to get a 2-2 result against Uruguay.

"The team was very eager to show this to the whole world," Cape Verde coach Bubista said, while draped in his country's flag. "We are proud of having arrived at this stage. We have shown that we are a small country, but that we fight for the things that we want to achieve."

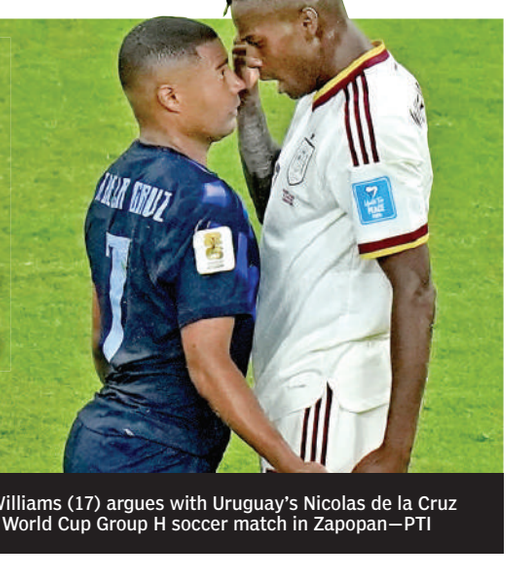
Cape Verde's three points put the team in second place behind Spain, which beat Uruguay on Friday night and won the group. Cape Verde will play reigning World Cup champion Argentina in Miami on 3 July. On the eve of the match, Bubista mused, "everyone is entitled to dream and nothing is impossible."

The Blue Sharks proved him right, overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds as this country of just more than 500,000 reached the Round of 32. A woman, her face painted with a flag of the archipelago, held a sign that read: "Small Islands, Big Dreams."

A dream that these underdogs have made reality as they continue their charmed run on the world stage.

SPAIN SENDS 2-TIME CHAMPS URUGUAY HOME

Muslera's error sends two-time champions home



Spain's Nico Williams (17) argues with Uruguay's Nicolas de la Cruz (7) during the World Cup Group H soccer match in Zapopan—PTI

GUADALAJARA, 27 JUNE

Spain defeated Uruguay 1-0 after another goalkeeping mistake by Fernando Muslera, advancing to the knockout stage of the World Cup and eliminating the South American powerhouse on Friday.

Uruguay, a two-time champion, will go home without any victories in its three Group H games. Spain, the European champion, won the group with seven points and will face the second-place team from Group J — either Austria or Algeria — on Thursday in Inglewood, California.

Álex Baena scored in the 42nd minute after Muslera couldn't fully swat away his shot from inside the area. It was the third blunder of the tournament by the 40-year-old Muslera, who asked coach Marcelo Bielsa to substitute him at halftime. Sergio Rochet came in to start the second half. "He is the one who decided to leave," Bielsa said.

The veteran Argentine coach said he feels like Uruguay deserved better luck considering its performances, and should have earned seven points instead of two from its group matches. But he took full responsibility for the team's failure. "No one wants to listen to explanations now," Bielsa said. "The blame is on me, I'm the one responsible for the disappointing work that I did. I had a group of quality players."

At 19th in the FIFA rankings, Uruguay is the highest-ranked team to be eliminated so far.

"Every match is different and you have to win every type of match," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said. "This was a game with maximum difficulty." —*PTI*

Egypt clears group stage for 1st time at World Cup

SEATTLE, 27 JUNE

Egypt advanced past the group stage at the World Cup for the first time while Iran, which had a potential late winning goal called back due to an offside, will have to wait one day to find out its fate after the two teams played to a 1-1 draw.

Egypt took an early lead on a goal by Mahmoud Saber in the fifth minute. Former Liverpool star Mohamed Salah provided some strong play in the box before Saber fired a shot between the legs of Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand. However, Salah had to leave the match midway because of a left knee injury, coach Hossam Hassan said.

In the 57th minute, Salah was surprisingly replaced by Mostafa Zico. In comments translated from Arabic, Hassan said Salah is being assessed by the team's medical staff, and will have another examination when Egypt returns to the team hotel.

The four-time Premier League Golden Boot winner scored his 68th international goal in the Pharaohs' first World Cup win, a 3-1 victory against New Zealand.

The 34-year-old has assisted on two other goals in the tournament.

Iran tied the match nine minutes later on a goal by Ramin Rezaeian, and nearly won the game in stoppage time.

Shoja Khalilzadeh fired a shot past Beiranvand in the 93rd minute, but it was overturned for offside after a video review.

Had the goal counted, Iran would have clinched a berth to the knockout round. —*PTI*

Shobeir pulled off an even better save to stop Milad Mohammadi finding the bottom corner, only to see Ramin Rezaeian react fastest to the loose ball and equalise from the tightest of angles

Rainbow flags dot Iran and Egypt match

Rainbow flags fluttered among the sea of Iranian and Egyptian banners at Seattle's World Cup stadium on Friday, as teams from two of the most repressive countries for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people took to the field.

It was just a coincidence that the city's "Pride Match" ended up as a high-stakes matchup between Iran and Egypt — with advancement from Group G still up in the air — and it came come with plenty of pushback from both countries. But Seattle officials and its soccer community say the distinctive pairing was an opportunity to showcase the city's inclusivity.

Some milled about the stadium with Pride Match scarves, while others had painted their faces with rainbows or clutched free flags handed out by a human rights organization. A man heading to his seat held a large sign that spelled out PRIDE as an acronym: "Proud, Respectful, Inclusive, Diverse, Egyptian." —*PTI*

Senegal routs Iraq 5-0, may reach knockout rounds

TORONTO, 27 JUNE

Senegal needed to win and it needed to win big. Done and done.

Senegal racked up the goals on 10-man Iraq in a 5-0 victory on Friday that boosted its chances of reaching the World Cup knockout stages.

"The job is done, but fate is no longer in our hands," Senegal coach Pape Thiaw said. "We have to wait until the other matches are over."

Pape Gueye scored twice in a second-half flurry as the Senegalese — vying to advance from third place in Group I — took advantage of a first-half red card on Iraq defender Rebin Sulaka, who prevented Sadio Mane from going in on goal alone by yanking his shirt.

Habib Diarra scored in the fourth minute and even though Sulaka was sent off in the 13th, Senegal didn't find the net again until Ismaila Sarr's goal in the 56th minute.

Gueye then added his two goals, both hard blasts from around the edge of the penalty area, and Iliman Ndiaye netted Senegal's fifth.

Senegal now has three points and a plus-two goal differential. The eight best third-place teams advance to the Round of 32. —*PTI*

Belgium's Leandro Trossard (10) celebrates after scoring his team's first goal

BELGIUM DEFEATS NEW ZEALAND 5-1 TO ADVANCE AT THE WORLD CUP

VANCOUVER , 27 JUNE

With a flurry of of goals, Belgium finally found its footing at the World Cup.

Leandro Trossard scored a pair of goals and Belgium overcame a slow start in the tournament to advance to the knockout round atop Group G with a 5-1 victory over New Zealand on Friday night.

Belgium will face an as-yet undetermined third-place finisher on Wednesday in Seattle. The match was played simultaneously to the other group finale in Seattle between Egypt and Iran, which ended in a 1-1 draw, dropping Egypt out of first.

The Belgians went into the match a surprising third in its group after opening the World Cup with a 1-1 draw against Egypt and a scoreless draw against Iran.

"I think we had the chances as well in the first two games, and we didn't take them. So it's important that we took them today," Trossard said. "And it's always nice to score a lot of goals, and we're just really happy to go through in first place as well."

Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Saelemaekers also scored for the Belgians, who were eliminated in the group stage in Qatar four years ago after finishing third at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. —*PTI*

Neeraj Chopra to compete in Japan Asian Games

BHUBANESWAR, 27 JUNE: Indian javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra will compete in the Asian Games in Japan in September-October in his bid to defend the title, Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) selection committee chairman Adille Sumariwalla confirmed on Saturday. Recovering from a lower back injury he had sustained before the Tokyo World Championships in September 2025, Chopra made a late start to the season at the Doha Diamond League where he finished fourth with a throw of 85.69 metres. —*PTI*

India reaches quarterfinals at Badminton Asia

TOKYO, 27 JUNE

Team India sealed their quarterfinals spot in the Badminton Asia Junior Mixed Team Championships with a dominant 2-0 (55-31, 55-21) win over Kazakhstan in their Group C opener at Yatsushiro, here on Saturday. With the clash against Chinese Taipei to decide the group winner looming, India mixed things up in doubles. The girls' doubles pairing of Durga Kandrapu and Keerthy gave India a strong start with a 11-5 win over Alissa and Diana. Puneeth and Deepti managed to eke out a 11-10 win to take the score to 22-15. —*PTI*

India take on Aus in Women's T20 WC clash

LONDON, 27 JUNE

With a place in the Women's T20 World Cup semifinals on the line, India will be desperate to overcome their fielding and batting woes when they take on six-time champions Australia in their final Group A clash here on Sunday.

The day's two matches will determine the semifinal lineup from the group, with South Africa (six points) taking on Bangladesh (four) at Lord's before India (six) meet unbeaten Australia (eight).

Given South Africa's overwhelming head-to-head (9-2 in 12 matches) record against Bangladesh, India's clash against Australia is expected to become a virtual quarterfinal for the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side.

If the Proteas, who are the last edition's finalists, win as anticipated, India will have to beat Australia to qualify, while a defeat would end the hopes of the reigning ODI world champions.

India's Shree Charani celebrates bowling out SA's Laura during the ICC Women's T20 WC match at Emirates Old Trafford in Manchester —*PTI*

Australia, on the other hand, can still afford a loss and progress courtesy their eight points and a far superior net run rate of 4.724.

However, an unlikely Bangladesh upset would ease the pressure on India as even in defeat, Kaur's side could still sneak into the last-four if their net run rate of 2.268 remains superior to South Africa's current 0.734.

But it will be no less than a test of character for Harmanpreet Kaur's side who have battled one issue after another throughout this campaign. The Indian think tank, led by Harmanpreet and head coach Amol Muzumdar, would thus know no such errors may allow them a chance to comeback in the contest against a rampant Australia who are on a roll, with their unbeaten run.

India will draw inspiration from their victory over Australia in the the ODI World Cup's semifinal, in which an innings of a lifetime from Jemimah helped them overcome the final frontier and set them on the path for their first-ever global title. —*PTI*

Nabi's four-wicket spell gives India 'A' 170-run lead

GALLE, 27 JUNE

J&K fast bowler Auqib Nabi impressed with the second new ball, claiming four wickets to help India 'A' establish a commanding 170-run lead against Sri Lanka 'A' on the third day of the opening 'Test'. Starting the day at 113 for 2, Sri Lanka 'A' reached 300 for 5 before Nabi's fiery spell dismissed them for 330. His figures were 4 for 58 in 19.4 overs, giving India a first innings lead of 122 after scoring 452 for six.

At stumps, India advanced to 48 without loss in their second innings, with opener Ayush Pandey and No. 3 Devdutt Padikkal both on 20. Opener Sai Sudharsan retired hurt on 4. On the fourth day, India aims to bat till lunch and set a target of around 300 for Sri Lanka's batsmen.

Sri Lanka's middle order flourished initially with Ashen Bandara (70) and Sahan Arachchige (72) building a 117-run partnership. Arachchige was aggressive against spinners Jain and Dubey, hitting three sixes and five boundaries. Jain and Dubey later dismissed both batsmen caught by Devdutt. Sri Lanka's last five wickets fell for just 30 runs, with Nabi dismissing the tail with incoming deliveries. —*PTI*

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Dominant India thrash Pakistan 7-1 in FIH Pro League

LONDON, 27 JUNE

The Indian men's hockey team produced a dominant display to thrash arch-rivals Pakistan 7-1 in the reverse fixture of the FIH Pro League's London leg.

After conceding an early goal, India stormed back through strikes from Sukhjeet Singh (20th), Harmanpreet Singh (26th), Hardik Singh (34th), Jugraj Singh (35th), Abhishek (41st), Raj Kumar Pal (44th) and Dilpreet Singh (54th) to register an emphatic victory at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre here on Friday.

Midfielder Hardik was adjudged the Player of the Match.

The contest began at a frenetic pace, with India earning the first penalty corner inside 90 seconds following a sharp baseline run by Mandeep Singh. Pakistan, however, looked dangerous on the counter and won a penalty corner in the 13th minute.

After India lost a video referral, Pakistan captain Abu Bakar Mahmood converted the drag-flick to put his side 1-0 ahead. India seized control in the second quarter with quick ball movement and accurate passes that stretched the Pak defence.

Pakistan suffered a setback in the 18th minute when Ahmad Nadeem was struck on the face by a deflected pass from teammate Ali Ghazanfar and had to leave the field.

India capitalised almost immediately. Harmanpreet's powerful drag-flick from a penalty corner was deftly deflected home by Sukhjeet in the 20th minute to restore parity.Six minutes later, the Indian skipper found the top-left corner with another drag-flick from a penalty corner to hand India a 2-1 lead at half-time. Pakistan earned two late penalty corners, but veteran midfielder Manpreet Singh produced crucial blocks to ensure India's commanding 7-1 victory. —*PTI*